



Life-Stories of Famous Men



GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

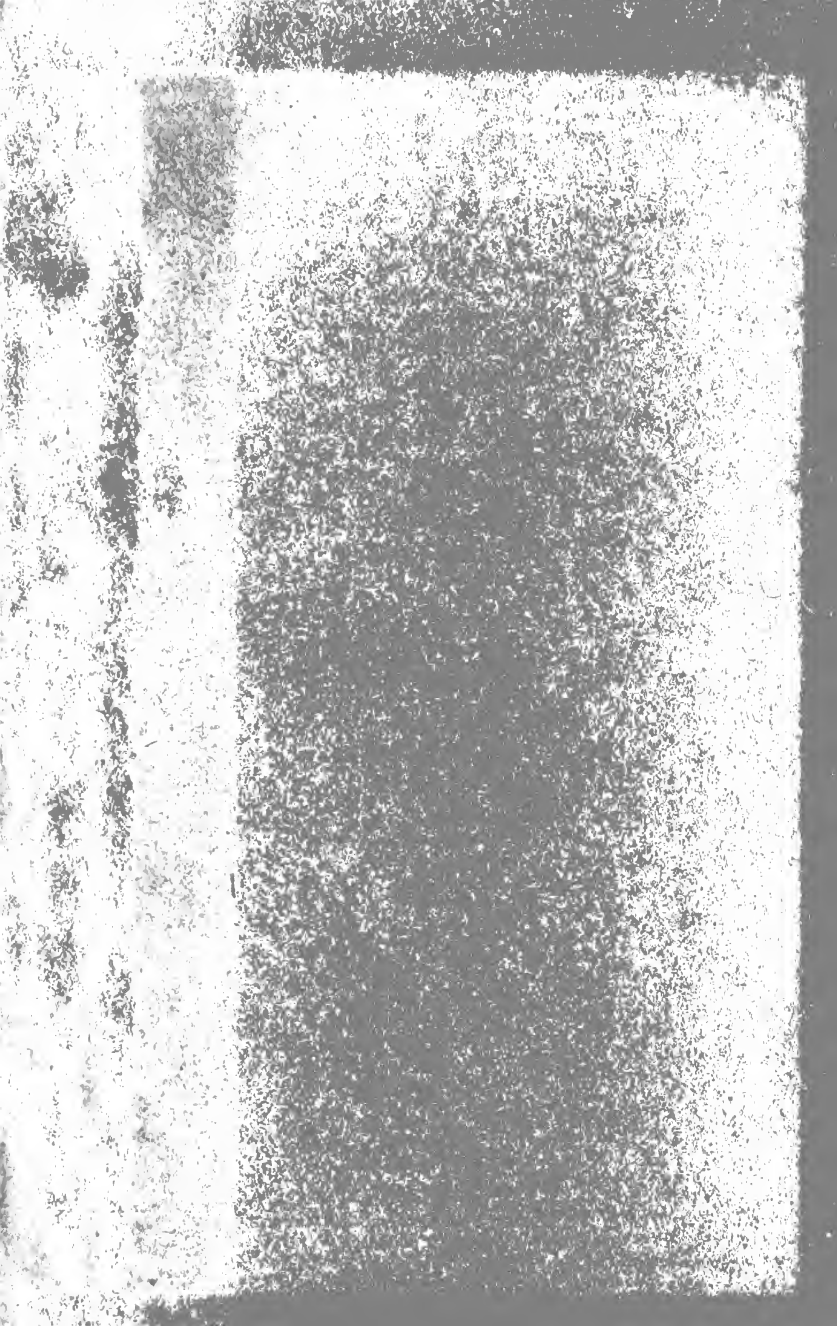


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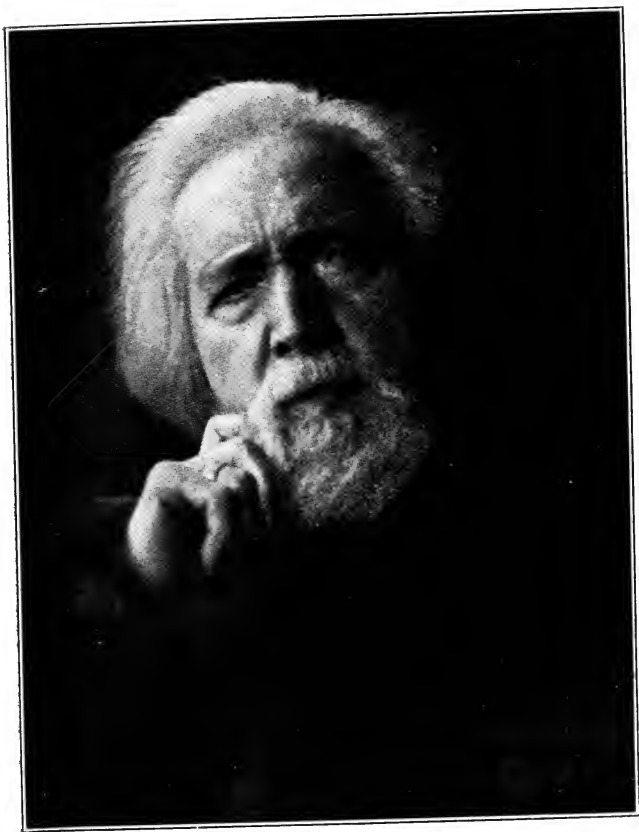
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LIFE-STORIES OF FAMOUS MEN

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

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GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE (1903)

LIFE-STORIES OF FAMOUS MEN

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE

BY

JOSEPH McCABE,

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE MAKING OF A MAN - - -	1
II. AN APOSTLE OF ROBERT OWEN - - -	11
III. IN THE ROARING FORTIES - - -	23
IV. PATRIARCH OF THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVE- MENT - - - - -	35
V. A CHAPTER OF BOMBS AND PLOTS - -	46
VI. HOME POLITICS - - - - -	57
VII. THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION - -	68
VIII. IN THE MATURE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT	80
IX. THE CROWNING PHASE - - - -	92
X. A SUNLIT AGE - - - - -	105

ILLUSTRATIONS

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE (1903) - -	<i>Frontispiece</i>
GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE 1847) - -	<i>Facing p. 25</i>
GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE (1888) - -	,, 56
THE MEMORIAL ON G. J. HOLYOAKE'S GRAVE IN HIGHGATE CEMETERY - - -	,, 89

PREFACE

TO compress the life of George Jacob Holyoake into a little more than a hundred pages is no light task. He was born in 1817, when the Holy Alliance completed its deadly grip on the throat of European progress, and he died in 1906, when social idealism stood again erect and radiant beside the dark old powers. Between those two dates stretches the noblest struggle on which the sun has ever shone, and Holyoake bore a lance in almost every single field. He fought war, ignorance, superstition, tyranny, injustice, folly, and cruelty all his life. We look back over that historic battle-ground, and we coldly study the "movements," as we call them, which brave men and women formed, and fed with their blood, while the millions enjoyed themselves. Holyoake is prominent in most of these liberating movements, is in the van of very many of them, and is the standard-bearer of not a few. In the early annals of nearly every triumphant reform of our time we find the name of the slender, refined working man who set out from a Birmingham foundry eighty years ago to slay dragons.

Fourteen years ago, after his death, I was invited to write a biography of him. Six large trunks of letters and other documents were placed before me. They would have made an intimate and vivid biography of the nineteenth century. Letters from Gladstone and Chamberlain

lay peacefully beside letters from half the firebrands of Europe. Letters from divines and professors mixed with glowing letters from Robert Ingersoll and Richard Carlile. The whole tragedy and comedy of the great play were unfolded. From them I extracted the story of "an agitator's life," to use his own phrase, and from that biography (*Life and Letters of George Jacob Holyoake*; 1908) I distil this little work. The dissatisfied reader must go to the original for a full treatment of the romantic scenes and picturesque struggles which are here coldly pressed into so many paragraphs.

J. M.

March, 1922.

I

THE MAKING OF A MAN

HOLYOAKE was born in Birmingham on April 13, 1817. He was the son of a foreman in the Eagle Foundry, who wore drab breeches and shining top-boots of a Sunday. His mother, a pious woman, ran a button-making business in a shed at the rear of the house. It was, therefore, for the time, a comfortable home. Probably it enjoyed a revenue of thirty shillings a week.

There was more of Jacob than of St. George about the child in those days. He grew in piety and good nature so promisingly that they called him "the angel-child." At the age of seven he learned the art of reading in the school of an old dame—who probably could not write. At the age of eight he began, after school hours, to solder the handles on tin lanterns and help to make buttons. At the age of nine he commenced to work in the Eagle Foundry, from six in the morning until six in the evening, including Saturdays; and he spent the Sunday in church or over religious books. He attended the Wesleyan Sunday School until he was fifteen, and continued to learn to read, but not to write.

There you have the story of the first fifteen years of his life. They were placid, healthy, and happy. But as the eyes and ears of the "angel-child" grew sharper, momentary shadows fell upon the sunny little world of his young mind. It was not that he had to work sixty-three hours a week and get a scanty education in his tired hours. Lucky in those days was the son of a

worker who had less hours of toil, or had any education at all. Not one in ten was taught to read. They learned their lessons from the book of life; and a dark, cruel, vicious life it was for the workers in those days. The orchestra that had accompanied Holyoake's birth had been a mingling of groans and curses wrung from the distress of the country. It was the year of the March of the Blanketeers. The wage of the adult was generally less than ten shillings a week, and bread was 1s. 5½d. the quartern loaf. Foreman Holyoake could afford a good joint, even a sucking pig on a festive occasion. But the distress deepened and spread, and at last it settled like a gloom on Birmingham.

George was eleven years old when he discovered that there was something wrong with creation. The rector of their parish church, St. Martin's, sent in his demand for tithe. It amounted only to fourpence, but pence were now so scarce that the bill was shelved. A younger sister was very ill, and there was little enough for her. The next week brought a fresh copy of the bill, with the addition of half-a-crown for costs. Mrs. Holyoake, recollecting that the bed had been taken from under an invalid neighbour shortly before to meet the rector's demands, hurried to the office. They kept her waiting five hours, and she returned to look on the dead face of her child. George himself got rheumatic fever at the funeral, and nearly followed his sister.

But that was all a part of life in the good old times, and George's piety was not dimmed. A few years later more stimulating things happened. The boy would hear strange talk from his father and in the foundry. Five million workers were in a state of chronic revolt. The bulk of them, the agricultural workers, got only 2½d. a day; the majority of the artisans only a shilling a day. One could hardly buy coarse bread, potatoes, and grease

1832 enough to feed a family. Trade unionism had been tried for five years, and had failed ; that is to say, Parliament, sodden with corruption, had let the workers form unions, and had fallen upon them with a mailed fist whenever they did anything. From the London paper, which came down on the coach, some literate worker would read out to the others how the country was full of burning ricks and wrecked factories and sabred rebels. They must capture Parliament. Two hundred thousand of them met one day on Newhall Hill, with bands and banners and brave orators, and swore to furnish the new King with an army of workers and enable him to pass the reform which, of course, he was eager to pass. Then the day came when the coach brought news that the King had refused ; and George saw medals bearing the King's head trampled under foot, and inn signs bearing the ruddy royal face framed in crape, and workers secretly making pikes, and the cavalry openly sharpening their swords. He found himself consecrated. On May 6, 1832, a crowd of 150,000 Birmingham and district workers closed a great meeting with the solemn oath : " With unbroken faith, through every peril and privation, we here devote ourselves and our children to our country's cause." Nothing less serious than a Cup-tie will attract a crowd like that to-day.

Decidedly the world was not so well ordered as the gentlemen in the pulpit represented. These vast meetings and pike-makings, however, taught the peers and prelates at London the beginning of wisdom, which is the fear of Demos, and the " great " Reform Bill passed. The golden age opened ; and, as it lasted nearly two years, we may trace George's further development.

There was a Mechanics' Institution in Birmingham, and in 1833 he began to attend it. Disciples of Robert Owen and liberal Unitarians taught devotedly in it, and

the boy learned not merely to write a beautiful hand, but logic, grammar, drawing, and mathematics. He could not afford to buy instruments, so he made compasses out of scraps of iron in the shop: a very bold act for an angel, as a shopmate had been transported for ten years for appropriating a file. He read the *Penny Magazine* and the *Penny Cyclopædia*. In 1836, when Isaac Pitman distributed the prizes, George and his iron compasses were introduced to the great man. "Pity that a master-mind should be so crippled," he said; and he gave George a set of instruments. George had been reading nearly every night, by candle light, in the attic, from seven to twelve, after ten or eleven hours in the shop. The recognition fired him, and he began to give one whole night a week to study.

For some years his growing secular knowledge associated kindly with his piety. He broadened without suspecting it. The Unitarian teachers were so generous that he taught a Sunday-school class in their chapel; stipulating that it should be near the door, in case God should let the roof down upon them some day. Then he taught in a Baptist Sunday school, but he was still so virtuous that he thought himself not holy enough to be baptized. Next he tried a Congregationalist chapel. He drew up a boyish list of the essentials of faith, which he would never surrender, and, armed with this, he went everywhere.

At least, he studied every religion except one—the "Rational Religion" which Robert Owen was then propagating. A lively shopmate, Hollick, joined the Owenites, and expounded the new religion to him. George found the proportion of reason to religion in it too strong for his constitution, and he refused to attend its meetings. Robert Hall was the type of preacher he loved; and he went one night, as he

thought, to hear Robert Hall, and found himself listening to a thin, refined, unemotional man who talked a very great deal about humanity and merely mentioned God, courteously, from time to time, as if in deference to the cosmic police. It was the other Robert. Holyoake did not shudder. To shudder at Robert Owen's doctrine you had to be quite ignorant of it. It was, in sum, that man's character was made by his circumstances; and so all the slums and sweating-shops and gin-shops and exploiters ought to be swept into the Styx, and a more beautiful world must be created.

Still, it was not Christian; and Holyoake remained a Christian until he was twenty-four years old. His education proceeded. His able Unitarian teachers, delighted with his originality and fine character, gave him special assistance, and he often pored over books in his attic until two or three in the morning—to rise at five for the hard work of the foundry. His social and more vital education went more slowly. None but the Owenites would then teach social science. You were not in England clapped into jail, as you would be in Italy and Spain, if you dared to look for any disease in the social and political organism, but you certainly became interesting to the authorities. As a natural result, secret societies multiplied. The reformed Parliament had proved a hollow sham. Within two years the workers turned from it in disgust, and Robert Owen was leading them along a new path. They must help themselves, co-operatively, as he had always told them. He formed a "grand Consolidated Trades Union," which in a few weeks had half-a-million members. He induced the Birmingham builders to erect a fine hall for themselves. The millennium was opening once more; and would, as usual, run a few months.

Holyoake was cut off from Owenism by his religious

ideas, and he joined a secret society. Unions were swearing-in brothers with ceremonies that would have delighted Dumas. The candidate was introduced blind-fold, and at the removal of the bandage he generally found himself confronting a skeleton, or a crude painting of one, while elder brethren in shirts, armed with cutlasses or tinfoil battle-axes, dictated fearsome oaths to him. It gave one the impression of doing something very drastic; though no one knew precisely what they were engaging to do. The Government's spies reported the situation, and a few savage sentences put an end to the melodrama.

The serious trouble began when Holyoake reflected that the Churches had nothing whatever to say on these matters which engrossed the attention of the nation. In those dark days not a clergyman in England gave any other message than resignation. The bishops opposed every reform. The Nonconformist bodies produced not a single minister who dared to denounce the prevailing brutality and injustice. Holyoake was now a very thoughtful and critical youth of twenty. Fine-natured from his boyhood, thin-blooded from his endless poring over books, he easily passed by the pitfalls of youth. His life was intellectual. His emotions were social. Fires again lit the country at night. Vast armies of hundreds of thousands of workers marched to meeting-grounds. The world, all awry for lack of wisdom, threatened to become one bloody arena of pike-bearers and troopers. And the preachers said that it was "politics" or "Radicalism" to talk about these things! Strange.

A new key to the millennium, Chartism, was brought out with the customary blaze of banners and blare of bands. The Reform Bill of 1832 had been a mistake because it merely, as Daniel O'Connell said, gave the Whig manufacturers a twenty years' lease of Downing

Street. Manhood suffrage, annual Parliaments, and the ballot were the real panacea. So George tried the new panacea. He became a Chartist. Birmingham had another meeting of 200,000 workers. Faint echoes of even larger meetings came from the north. This time they were going to "flesh the sword to the hilt," in the words of one of their chief orators. They marched under the sign of the skull and cross-bones. Westminster was trembling this time, they said. And in a few months their leaders were flung into the fetid jails of the time, and from his little cottage off the Bull Ring Holyoake watched the maddened troopers chase his bolder comrades by the light of their burning homes.

But the end of this, the first phase of Chartism, was in 1839, and we must return a little. In the summer of 1838 Holyoake had found a new remedy for humanity's ills. There came to Birmingham the apostle of the new gospel, phrenology. George Combe had expounded his mixture of good humanitarianism and bad anatomy in a work called *The Constitution of Man*, which Holyoake had read. He was not aware that Combe was no more Christian than Owen or any of the other reformers. His gospel sounded both scientific and spiritual. A man's character or ability was determined by its material organ, the brain. The supreme wisdom was to read everybody's "bumps" and direct people to their proper places. Holyoake had the distinction of being appointed assistant to the lecturer for fourteen nights.

The sequel brings the young man before us as no other event of his youth does. Combe's gospel was very profitable in those days. In fourteen nights he had a good harvest, and friends urged Holyoake to ask for payment for his services. Combe had merely given him a cheap copy of his *Elements of Phrenology*, and the moralist's bump of indignation swelled when Holyoake

asked for money. It was humiliating enough for Holyoake to learn that he was the first young man in all the lecturer's experience to advance so greedy a claim, but a worse outrage was that Combe said that he had done the work badly. He wrote a letter to Combe, and he kept it until he was able to deliver it personally eight years afterwards. I have read the letter. It might have been written by Marcus Aurelius.

Combe left behind him in Birmingham a Swiss named Bally, who used to make the plaster casts for him. Bally in turn employed Holyoake. He was to find customers, and as a reward he was to have a free cast of his own head. On the auspicious day he prepared his long black hair and pale features with especial care, and went to Bally's house. The man had just left for Manchester! This double trial was too much for Holyoake's overworked constitution. His nerves broke, and he set out on a long walking tour. Bally was among the Owenites of Manchester, he heard, and he walked to Manchester and found him. What he did again gives us the measure of his character. He stood at Bally's door, delivered to him a very polite and dignified lecture on honesty, and bade him "Good morning."

The walking tour restored his health and quickened his development. Inquiring for Bally among the Manchester Socialists, he met Owen himself and had talk with him. From Manchester he walked to Liverpool, and he met the Socialists there. He sailed for the Isle of Man; and at Douglas he wrote his first remunerated piece of journalism, for *Mona's Herald*. The fee was a bottle of port and a roast chicken. He walked home through eastern Wales, eating frugally and lodging at cottages. The whole tour, which lasted five weeks, cost only five pounds.

When he resumed work at the foundry in the autumn of 1839 Holyoake was an older, wiser, and less religious man. He had endured many disillusionings, and even Chartism was now plainly going the way of all "movements." He looked dimly overseas, to the fairyland of America, and to the strange new land, of which men spoke, under the Southern Cross. The dingy, noisy foundry, with its iron discipline, seemed a symbol of England: soul-destroying, hopeless, unalterable. But Cupid saved him for England. In Belcher's Unitarian book-shop, where he dealt a little and lingered much, as impecunious youths will, was a cheerful, sensible maiden of the name of Eleanor. George was a bashful lover—he had already allowed one pretty offer of the gods to float by—but they came at length to an understanding.

It is a sufficient indication of his mental development and her liberality that they were, on March 10, 1839, married in the Registry Office. Some measure of civic freedom had been wrung from the reformed Parliament, and Registrars of civil marriages had recently been appointed. William Pare, local leader of the Owenites, had obtained the office, and he gave the pair his civic blessing and hearty personal wishes; for Holyoake was now virtually an Owenite. The foundry still irritated him, and he left it and had adventurous and hungry days. Michael Wright, the oldest of his Unitarian counsellors, found him work as assistant at an exhibition of machinery. Then Wright died, and Holyoake took his place at the Mechanics' Institution. He now, however, openly associated with the Owenites, and religious folk entered upon the usual personal campaign against the "apostate." None questioned his competence in teaching or the exceptionally high standard of his character. But he had, though he hardly realized it as yet, ceased to be a Christian, and he must pay the price.

In the first month of 1840 he surrendered his place at the Institution, and nervously faced the world. A child was expected soon, and there was not enough to fill two mouths. They lived in a little cottage on the fringe of the town, and were very frugal. Eleanor grew mustard and cress, to give some taste to the monotonous bread and butter. Kindly neighbours insisted on sharing a pot of stout at times with the pale expectant mother. George ran hither and thither after elusive employment. For a few months he taught in a private school. He kept the books of a venetian blind maker for eight shillings a week. He wrote advertisements at seven shillings and sixpence each. He gave private lessons in mathematics; and sometimes got the fee. But the lean grey wolf drew steadily nearer. This was the ironic end of ten years of intense self-education! Had he remained a "working man," his skill and sobriety would by this time have won for him a comfortable position. Certainly there was something wrong, fundamentally wrong, with the world, in spite of the well-fed optimism of the rector of St. Martin's. He turned to the Owenites.

II

AN APOSTLE OF ROBERT OWEN

TO this series of little biographies of great men I have already contributed a life of Robert Owen, the noblest and most consistent and not least effective of early social reformers. I cannot repeat here how the great Welshman—far greater than a score of men of the time who are now called great, while his name is forgotten—sprang, like Holyoake, from the upper working class, and educated himself; how by fine, honest work he became a prosperous manufacturer, and devoted his fortune and his life to the uplifting of the workers and the annihilation of injustice and misery; how he was the first to insist that ugly surroundings make ugly souls, and proved his gospel by a marvellous industrial community at New Lanark which was the wonder of Europe; how, when the Government refused to create such communities on a large scale, he appealed to the people to do it themselves.

Owen was at the highest point of his influence during the few years we have just surveyed. His "Rational Religion," as he now called his social creed, had a hundred thousand direct adherents, and he had a very large moral authority over a million workers. When we remember the small population of the time, especially the small town population, and the very poor means of transit and communication, this was a triumph. Let us add at once that Owen's direct aim—the formation of thousands of model communities of the New Lanark

type—was impracticable. His real value was in the ideas on which his model community would be based. He anticipated, or was one of the first to propagate, almost every great social reform of the nineteenth century.

Holyoake was the spiritual son and successor of the great Welsh reformer. He soon realized that the creation of model communities was not practicable or advisable. He saw the various ideas which entered Owen's comprehensive standard of communal life taken up by separate movements. That was the only way to get them realized. But he kept all the breadth of the Owenite ideal in his own mind, as, unfortunately, few reformers do ; and that is why he became a prominent worker in so many movements. Above all, he continued throughout life to lay the chief stress on character, on positive culture ; and in this again he was to the end of his life a disciple of Owen. Let us now trace how the fine character which parents and churches had implanted in him rapidly matured in the sunlight of Owenite idealism.

It was in 1836 that he mistook the name of Robert Hall for Robert Owen, and first heard the reformer. In the first month of the next year he began to attend the Owenite meetings and join in their discussions. Presently he took a class in their Sunday school, and at times he gave readings before the lectures on Sundays. We saw that he was well known to the Owenites of Manchester and Liverpool in the autumn of 1838.

In that year Owen, who was nothing if not an optimist, divided England into six regions or dioceses, and appointed a "Social Missionary" to convert each to the Rational Religion. The episcopal stipend was from £80 to £100 a year. Hollick, Holyoake's friend and shop-mate, was one of these missionaries, and he

urged Holyoake to enlist in the same service. Holyoake still counted himself a Christian, as I said, but the Rational Religion really did not concern itself about religion. Its aim was positive human service, which it called religion. Owen was an Agnostic, but he never wished to discuss religion. When he was pressed he, like Buddha and Confucius, frankly said that it was a waste of time, as there were more important things to do. The bishops clamoured in the House of Lords for the suppression of these rival "bishops," and *Punch* amiably caricatured their zeal. It was quite well known that the Rational Religion hoped to put an end to all Churches by displacing them.

By 1840, however, Holyoake seems to have ceased to go to church. The Churches had no social message. He therefore applied to the Owenite Congress for enrolment as one of its new missionaries. His name was well received, but there was as yet no vacancy, and in the autumn of that year he accepted an invitation from the Worcester Owenites to become their local "preacher." He made his entry on the public stage.

It was a very humble beginning. The "Hall of Science" at Worcester was a small workshop in a dingy street, reached by the kind of rough wooden staircase one finds outside such places when they are not on the ground floor. The worshippers of science were so few and poor that they dared not promise more than sixteen shillings a week, and they had difficulty in raising that. Little Madeline and her mother had to remain at Birmingham, and Holyoake had to walk twenty-six miles each way when he would see his family. He eked out the income in various ways. There was a private school in the town at which he was permitted to teach mathematics; but he had to pass under the name of "Mr. Jacobs," lest any sensitive parent should learn

that he was one of those awful people who wanted to make the world better.

But Holyoake was touched by the sacred fire, the grand passion of humanity, and neither scorn nor sacrifice can turn from his path the man whose mind has once been thoroughly lit by it. He lives in a world that has a fascination of its own; to say nothing of the esteem and appreciation of some small or large circle of his fellows. He struts the stage. He feels the lime-light. A vast amount of nonsense has been talked and written about the psychology of reformers. Being a reformer, I am not likely to malign my class; but the work has its consolations. Your true reformer—there are many false reformers, and the talk about sacrifice generally comes from them—is a man before whom the fates have laid two alternatives: speak out, or be damned in your own conscience. He speaks out, and he has his reward—and his punishment.

George Jacob Holyoake was, like Robert Owen, a true reformer. I have written many biographies, of many types—St. Augustine, the great Father of the Church; Peter Abélard, the brilliant scholar of the Middle Ages; Cardinal Richelieu, the French prelate-statesman; Prince Talleyrand, Goethe, Professor Haeckel, the Roman Emperors, George Bernard Shaw, the Kaiser, and so on. In only two cases have I found *nothing* to conceal, to explain away, to dress in the veil of charity. Those two are Robert Owen and George Jacob Holyoake. Heaven forbid that I should make a stained-glass angel of Holyoake! I remember him as above all things human, fond of cream in his coffee and a fur lining to his coat, with a merry twinkle in his eyes which would rebuke any man who made of him a medieval saint or an Epictetus. Yet, honestly, I remember no episode of any consequence in the life which six trunks of memorials

laid before me that needed a gloss. He was a consistently straight man in a crooked world. This was the effect of the gospel of Owen on a naturally fine character.

At Worcester he worked out his ideas on Owenite lines. Robert Owen had at that time written little, and he wrote badly. His power was in the logic of his plans. These gave Holyoake the key to the problem of life, which the Churches had failed to give him. It was quite useless to preach justice and brotherly love. Somehow the masters and the politicians believed that they *were* just; and no pulpit under which they sat ever disturbed their complacency. It was not enough. Owenism, or "Socialism" as it was beginning to be called, hit the unjust full in the face. To keep the workers ignorant, to grind them and their children for sixty hours a week or more, to have insanitary mills and foul cottages, to be indifferent to their drunkenness and dog-fights, to heap up fortunes while they lived with hunger and fever—these were concrete injustices, all over Britain. Owenism was one sustained and detailed condemnation of them.

The Owenite Congress of 1841 appointed Holyoake to the diocese of Sheffield, and with his little family he moved to the smoky hollow framed in glorious green hills and picturesque crags. His diocese stretched from Bradford to Derby and Nottingham. His stipend was thirty shillings a week. His palace, for which he paid rent, was a workman's cottage. But there was a handsome Hall of Science at Sheffield for his ministrations, and he opened a Pestalozzian school with fifty pupils. He made friends who helped him onward. George Julian Harney, the Chartist, lived there, and he esteemed Holyoake all his life. Ebenezer Elliott, the popular poet, invited him to coffee. Samuel Smiles, who then

edited the *Leeds Times*, was very friendly, and took contributions from him.

Before the end of 1841 he was so well known in Sheffield that he was caricatured in the Christmas pantomime. It was a caricature that would not displease him. *Jack the Giant-Killer* was the play; and the principal boy "got up" as the young giant-killer of the Hall of Science in Rockingham Street. We have Holyoake's portrait of the time, and can imagine it. He was still lean, pale, and serious. His finely-cut, regular features were surrounded by a cascade, neatly groomed, of fairly long black hair. A man might be worse caricatured than in the rôle of giant-killer.

Apostolic troubles were not long in moving upon the anxious little home. The Owenite movement was decaying, and the thin Sheffield congregation raised his stipend with difficulty. Distant towns in his diocese could not pay coach-fare. He had to walk to Huddersfield and back to visit a remnant of his flock. At last a heavy cloud appeared on the horizon.

I have said that the bishops thundered against Owenism in the House of Lords. The Lords yawned, but the followers of the bishops in the country got to work. They found that the Owenites took money at the doors on Sundays, and that there was an ancient and musty Act of Parliament which forbade any but parsons to do so. It is still mustier and more ancient to-day, but we patiently allow bigots to spoil our Sundays by it. However, the old gun was deadly in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the Owenites were called to account. We saw that Owen did not wish to quarrel with the Churches or discuss theology. The business men who managed the movement were still less anxious to have it stamped anti-theological. They needed capital. So they advised Owenite societies to say that they were

"Protestants, called Rational Religionists." Their missionaries were then called upon to make profession, on oath, of the Protestant religion, and some of them did so.

Holyoake and others resented this. In the case of most of them it was just rough, honest intolerance of a piece of hypocrisy. They were not men of Holyoake's moral fibre. To Holyoake himself it seemed an outrage on the principles of Owenism, and in a few months he found himself ousted by the intrigues of Lloyd Jones and the Central Board of the movement.

It is well known that a few months later Holyoake was in jail for blasphemy. Some of his modern admirers may wonder if he had in those days all the refinement of his later years, and we must trace the events which culminated in his imprisonment. The Bristol missionary, Southwell, goaded by the excessive caution of the Central Board, began to criticize religion very fiercely. He had been an actor and a soldier, and his lungs were as vigorous as his vocabulary. He began also to publish an anti-Christian weekly, *The Oracle of Reason*. For an article in the fourth issue of it he was sent to jail, and he summoned Holyoake to Bristol. Holyoake was stung by the intolerance, and he took Southwell's place. The reader must remember that religious tyranny in those days was revolting; but that will be plain enough presently.

After editing *The Oracle of Reason* for some weeks from Sheffield, Holyoake set his face southward. From Birmingham, where he left his wife and child, he started to walk to Bristol, ninety miles away. Naturally, he gave Worcester a call on the way, and on May 24 he gave the lecture at Cheltenham which brought upon him all the terror of the fanaticism of the time.

The Vicar of Cheltenham, the Rev. F. Close (after-

wards Dean Close), owned the chief local paper, and he sent men to report the horrible things which the missionary was going to say in the heart of that highly respectable town. But the lecture was quite innocent. It was on "Home Colonization as a Means of Super-seding Poor Laws and Emigration." The lecturer, true to Owen's wish, did not mention religion. So the disappointed spies drew him. He had told them a lot about their duty to man, one said; what about their duty to God? Holyoake's impromptu reply was to the effect that, the country being so poor and in need of attention as it was, they would do better to suspend religious service and give all their devotion to man. He has reproduced his little speech in his *Last Trial for Atheism*, and I have given the relevant part of it in my large biography. Here it is enough to quote the one sentence which was selected as the base of prosecution:—

I appeal to your heads and your pockets if we are not too poor to have a God. If poor men cost the State so much, they would be put, like officers, on half-pay. I think that while our distress lasts it would be wise to do the same thing with the Deity.

If any person calls this ribald or vulgar or scurrilous, I would ask him to compare with it the language in which Mr. H. G. Wells now describes the Christian God in one of our leading magazines, *The Fortnightly Review*: "A vigorous but uncertain old gentleman with a beard and an inordinate lust for praise and propitiation."

But the Vicar of Cheltenham brought the passage to the notice of the magistrates, and it was decided to arrest Holyoake. He at once came back to Cheltenham and surrendered. The details which preceded, accompanied, and followed his trial must be read in my larger work. He was treated with barbarity. They proposed that he be made to walk to Gloucester, handcuffed, between two

policemen; but his friends paid the fare of the trio. At Gloucester they lodged him in a filthy and very verminous cell, and made it impossible for him to get bail within a fortnight. The Home Secretary admitted in the House that "grave irregularities" had been committed, and Holyoake secured bail and went to London to see his supporters and prepare his defence. He returned to Birmingham to see his wife and child, and surrendered to his bail at Gloucester on August 2. Such disgust at the Cheltenham fanaticism had been aroused in London that an Act was hastily passed transferring cases of the kind to the Assizes.

Yet the trial was a mockery. The prosecuting barrister, Mr. Alexander, made speeches that seemed to be expressly modelled on those of Sergeant Buzfuz in *Pickwick*. The indictment venomously described Holyoake as "a labourer." He spoke for nine hours—for which he richly deserved his sentence, the governor of the jail jocularly told him—and melted the hearts of Christian ladies until they offered him tarts. He refused the mild proposal of Mr. Justice Erskine, who did not want to sentence him, that he should say that all he meant was that the incomes of the clergy ought to be reduced. That was the obvious meaning of his words, but he loathed the appearance of compromise; so Mr. Justice Erskine gave him six months because he had spoken with "improper levity."

He had had no food for thirteen hours, and, as the sacred hour of meals was over when they took him to the jail, the regulations forbade them to give him food. A warder gave him, covertly, an apple and a cup of water. Then his real martyrdom began. The cell was filthy, damp, and cold. The food was gruel, coarse bread, and potatoes, with a morsel of leathery salt beef twice a week in the winter. He refused to don the

prison dress or attend chapel, and they spared themselves the trouble of making him. That he might make some use of his time he got, through London friends, the special permission of the Home Secretary to sit up until nine. But the Home Office forgot that it was winter and said nothing about a candle, and the pious folk of Gloucester refused to let him have a light. He stuck pins along the edges of a board, ran threads (to act as lines) from pin to pin, and wrote in the dark. But the dull day's round, the vile environment, the brutality of it all to a young man who knew how high his ideals were, soaked into him. For his obstinacy they withheld his letters and refused visitors. He found himself a quivering nervous system in a world of grey horror. At last he got a letter. His lovely little child, weakened by poor food, had died of fever. His wife was prostrate. So they tempted him. If he would promise never again to propagate Rationalism or Owenism, he could walk out. He refused ; and he examined the iron feet of his bed to see if there was a spike which, in case of madness threatening him, might be driven through his temple..... And all over England there were men and women who naively wondered why certain creatures attacked religion.

The most remarkable thing is that, apart from the hour of greatest trial, Holyoake bore himself so cheerfully. All that we have said so far suggests a very solemn young man, and it looks, at first sight, as if the horrors of Gloucester jail unsealed the vein of humour which brightens all his later work. This was not so, of course, but we now begin to have contemporary proof that, with all his earnestness, he was already extremely witty and entertaining.

The chaplain invited him to the chapel one day for a private harangue. "This place is too cold for reasoning," Holyoake said in the end ; and he got an hour in a warm

room. The chaplain offered him a cheap Bible. He submitted that it was "not respectful to God to present his word in that curmudgeon form," and obtained a handsome copy. A visiting magistrate sagely quoted to him: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." "I no more admire rudeness in the mouth of David than I do in the mouth of a magistrate," he quietly replied. They gave him up, and were content to describe him as "the worst felon in the jail and the most atrocious." He was the only felon, or other human being, in it who tried to educate and seriously uplift the poor prisoners who shared its horrors with him.

It may be suggested that it is his later fun which he has read into the prison days. Not in the least. I have read letters that he wrote from jail, and his articles in the *Oracle* just after his release. They are full of humour and sprightliness. He was critical of religion, naturally. He had, in his quaint phrasing, "been called upon to pay a certain price for free speech, and, as he had paid it, he had purchased the right." He went back to Cheltenham and repeated his offensive words. The vicar and the clerical magistrates found it convenient to slumber. They had been heavily punished in the press and the House. He went up to London, and became secretary to "Branch 53" of the Owenite movement, at ten shillings a week. Owenism was sinking lower than ever under the burden of its religious feud. Holyoake clung to the outspoken Rationalists, though his speeches and articles were always temperate and dignified. He organized an "Anti-Persecution Union," for his colleagues were on all sides passing into such jails as that from which he had emerged. He gave classes in logic and literature, and published his early works. *Paley Refuted in His Own Words* (1844) was one of the books he had written in the dark. It soon ran to a sixth edition.

With a friend named Ryall he started a new paper, *The Movement*, which lived for fifteen months.

But "the movement"—the Owenite movement—was doomed. With a last spasm of energy it had built a splendid institution at Queenwood, in Hampshire, for housing an ideal colony. It was extravagantly planned and furnished, and rumours of failure soon spread. Holyoake went to see it, and *The Movement* gave an exhilarating account of his discoveries. It was declared bankrupt in 1845, and the last hopes of Owenism were buried in it. *The Movement* followed the "movement" into limbo. Metropolitan Owenism was shattered, and Holyoake again broke down. A new admirer, W. J. Birch, a well-known writer on Shakespeare, discovered him in a serious condition, and nursed him back to life. But it was like harvesting in the fields when the first frosts are on them. From Glasgow came a last invitation to be local preacher to an Owenite society, and the Holyoake family, now four in number, made the fearful journey. We need say only that he remained with his spirited but poor little flock six months. But he came back to London in the spring of 1846 with a new energy. He would carve a little kingdom of his own out of the stricken provinces of the master. Owen had sailed for America.

III

IN THE ROARING FORTIES

IT was to a world of ruined hopes and weather-beaten wrecks that Holyoake returned from Scotland in the spring of 1846. Owenism, the greatest promise of the first half of the nineteenth century, was dead. The little company of "Atheists," which had budded out from it, was withered. Chartism seemed to have sunk into the languor of old age. The Unions were almost powerless. Phrenology was in disrepute. Co-operation was represented only by one poor store at Rochdale and a hundred wrecks of more ambitious enterprises. Reaction raised its brazen front triumphantly in the metropolis and smiled upon the ruins. The "old immoral world" had conquered and extinguished the "new moral world," to use the language of the Owenites.

For a giant-killer the age was rich in opportunities, though desperately poor in resources. But just while Holyoake looked anxiously round for some weapon, some organ of utterance, a gentleman walked into his poor tenement at Covent Garden and laid ten five-pound notes on the table.

While he was at Glasgow, Holyoake had learned that the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows had offered a prize of ten pounds each for five lectures on Charity, Truth, Knowledge, Science, and Progression. He was himself an Oddfellow—the oddest of Oddfellows. It seems to have been a branch of that society to which he had been secretly initiated in his youth at Birmingham; and these

edifying lectures were precisely intended to replace the foolish initiation ceremonies which he had experienced. So with his finest penmanship and neatest style he wrote five lectures and, with a very faint hope, sent them in. The judges were dismayed to find that the anonymous lectures they chose as the best were from the pen of the ex-prisoner for blasphemy, the best known Atheist in England. But the authorities were honest and courageous Lancashire men. Holyoake's essays were the best, and Holyoake got the fifty pounds.

The little home was still lean and sober, but Holyoake was an apostle. With the fifty pounds he started a weekly magazine, *The Reasoner*. Surely now one might make a pantomime hero of him? With a capital of fifty pounds and a few small pages of print, turned out by his brother Austin in some inky den off Fleet Street, he was opening a campaign upon the press, pulpits, and Parliament of the metropolis! Yet Holyoake was no Don Quixote. His pages had a rare sparkle and fine sentiment. One by one they drew to him men and women of distinction. It was the beginning of his influence. Before long he found himself seriously regarded by Harriet Martineau, the first woman-writer of England; W. J. Fox, one of the greatest orators of the time; Francis Place, the veteran reformer; William Ellis, the pioneer of education; Thomas Allsop, "the beloved disciple of Coleridge"; W. H. Ashurst, Solicitor to the Post Office and great friend of reformers; G. H. Lewes, the philosopher; Francis Newman, professor and brother of the cardinal; J. Stansfeld, later Privy Councillor and Cabinet Minister, and others whose friendship was an honour and an education.

At first the *Reasoner* (which ran for fifteen years) was Owenite in tone. Theology was politely criticized. Holyoake at this stage frankly described himself as





GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE (1847)

Atheist; the word "Agnostic" having not yet been invented by Huxley, or he would have regarded it as the correct description of his views. Beyond this, moral and social issues were treated rather in the abstract. Father Time soon gave a grim concreteness to his message. Famine had spread over Ireland, and floods of Irishmen (including the clan McCabe) had poured into England to dispute employment with the Sassenach. The grisly spectre stalked again through England. Free Trade had not opened a new industrial era; it had proved a fresh disillusion. The workers fed scantily on turnips, vile bread, and tea made with burnt crusts or leaves of mint. Cholera followed in the steps of hunger. Irish orators fanned the smouldering embers of earlier movements; as they did, doubtless, in prehistoric days, and will be found doing at the crack of doom. Chartism, with its "Blood or Bread" banners, returned to life.

This was in 1847. Holyoake had just settled down, as he thought, to a course of academic study. He was going to repair the defects of his education and win a degree. University College in Gower Street had recently been established as a purely secular university, and Holyoake had borrowed from Mr. Ashurst fifty pounds (which he repaid, though it was not expected) to pay his fees. He was wrestling with the subtleties of Latin grammar and Greek accents when the increasing roar of the people's voice broke upon his ears.

Holyoake was, we remember, a Chartist—and most other things that were not respectable. He now set out to play the part for which his character and good sense fitted him. Most of the popular orators talked of pikes and sabres. Holyoake pleaded for education, agitation, and political action. He was so far heard that the fiery folk of the north condescended to notice him. "The mildest-mannered man in the ranks of public disputants,"

said the *Northern Star*. "Bought by the Government," said others. In the art of reckless vituperation no one can beat the advanced person who complains most bitterly of being himself misrepresented. Holyoake knew that no good would come of bloodshed or mutual abuse. Hot air fills the belly, but is not very nourishing. The physical-force Chartists could, they said, boast three million signatures to their petition; and before the end of the decade their movement would be dead and dishonoured.

Holyoake's wiser message appealed to a very large number, and he began to feel something of the stimulation of leadership. But events now took a turn which gave a fatal victory to the physical-force party, and in time brought about the strange spectacle of the apostle of moral force testing bombs for assassins and collecting bayonets for rebels.

The Italians, who had been bloodily crushed by the Papacy and Austria and Naples since Waterloo, began a series of effective revolts early in 1848. While men listened to this interesting news there came, almost suddenly, from Paris the report of the third French Revolution. Presently followed the news of successful revolt in Hungary; then of democratic revolutions in Germany and Austria; lastly of the flight of the Pope and the establishment of a Republic at Rome. Surely the golden age was opening this time!

The Chartists had meantime moved upon London, and the old Owenite headquarters, the John Street Institution, seethed with discussion. In March the Chartists met on Kennington Common. They were going to march upon Westminster, with a petition signed by five million adults, and compel the Government to grant the six points of "the People's Charter": manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, the ballot, the payment of members, equal

electoral districts, and the abolition of the property qualification. The Government enrolled 150,000 special police, and marshalled all its forces of troops and police. Guns protected the Bank and the Mansion House. Citizens retreated behind domestic barriers, waiting for the roar of civil war. And all that happened was that 20,000 very tame Chartists marched to the House of Commons between the 180,000 soldiers and police; and the great petition was found to contain less than two million signatures, many of which were fraudulent. For the thousandth time in history physical force was discredited.

Few knew better than Holyoake what an opportunity had been sacrificed by the vanity of leaders and the impatience of the masses. The points of the Charter were so obviously just that in those days even Carlyle, as Holyoake knew, subscribed to them. There was, in fact, a large middle-class sentiment in favour of far more drastic proposals than the Charter. Not only fiery young poets like Swinburne and fiery old literary men like Savage Landor, but even quiet scholars like Professor Francis Newman, were Republicans. Holyoake, who had one leg in this world and one among the Chartists, was aware of this. His chief aim was to unite workers and intellectuals in a great educational and political campaign. He opposed what he regarded, on the experience of the last twenty years, as utopias, and was for practical measures. He became a "Liberal" in politics.

Ashurst bought for him a small paper, *The Spirit of the Age*, and for a few months he (maintaining the *Reasoner* for his general philosophy) expounded his political views in this, writing over the pseudonym of "Ion." It was so practical that one friend proposed to change the title to *The Matter of the Age*, and another

suggested that he ought to style himself "Iron." His motto was: "The Radical [extremist] forgets that society has a past—the Conservative that it has a future.....We want the wisdom which will dare, but dare securely." His extremist friends snorted. But Holyoake was no mere Whig. Noticing somewhere the cry of the friends of "order," he says that it is a demand that "selfish opulence shall disport itself with applause, and intelligent mechanics learn to starve with politeness." He still mixed daily with the "Radicals." He was elected to the executive of the Chartist movement. He helped Lovett to found a "Friends of All Nations" League. He joined the National Reform League of Bronterre O'Brien and Lloyd Jones, and Hetherington's League of Social Progress.

It was all futile. The great effervescence of 1848 slowly died away. The new French Republic prepared to become a respectable bourgeois Empire, and the democrats began to fly to London. The Roman Republic fell. The German and Austrian monarchs recovered power, and bespattered their capitals with blood in the good old style. Those who had taken the sword perished by the sword. *The Spirit of the Age* sickened and died. Holyoake went back to his Greek grammar and his articles in the *Reasoner*, and his lectures up and down the country.

Among his papers I found one that shows the indomitable spirit and hope of the man. The cholera raged again in England. It was a sultry August (1849), and Holyoake still lived in the atmosphere of Covent Garden. He was ill, very ill; and seven hundred people were dying of cholera every day. Even on the slopes of Hampstead and Richmond men were pale with anxiety. Hetherington, one of the great-hearted reformers of those days, had just died, and Holyoake had spoken the last

words over his grave. At home, with the rustle of the wings of death all round him, he wrote his will. That document was not only not written for publication, but Holyoake never used it in his autobiographical works. It just puts his personality on paper. And this is the preamble of it:—

If this epidemic takes me suddenly, I shall be obliged to apologize to my readers and friends for my abrupt and unceremonious departure. Yet, when I think of it, I am so busy that I really have not time to die. My duties and my studies so occupy me that I shall be obliged to treat the cholera with rudeness, as I shall be too much engaged to pay it any attention. If, however, the cholera should be wilful, and not disconcerted by my incivilities, it is necessary that I make a will.

But those who wish to know his deeper thoughts in those days, when death was very near and heaven farther from his mind than ever, should read his little *Logic of Death*, the most beautifully written of his works. It ran to a hundredth edition.

The work went on. The Greek grammar was again laid aside. Ashurst found funds for a new paper, *The People's Review*, and lost £70 in three issues of it. This was Holyoake's eighth paper in eight years. "Like flags carried in battle," he says cheerfully of these early papers, "they were made out of such material as happened to be available in the exigencies of forced marches, and were often shot into tatters by the enemy."

He was now a skilful journalist. Few in the metropolitan press had a livelier and more picturesque pen. We shall presently find the editors of paltry provincial journals writing, from religious prejudice, that he was an Atheistic mountebank juggling with the Bible for coppers which he could not earn otherwise. He did not tell them, though I know the fact from his Diary, that

Sir Joshua Walmsley, who met and admired him, had offered him a good place on the *Daily News*. In the spring of 1850, however, he took a not unimportant place in metropolitan journalism. Thornton Hunt, son of Leigh Hunt, started a paper called *The Leader*, and Holyoake was appointed manager and member of the staff. He continued in it the "Ion" letters which he had begun in the *Spirit of the Age*. His colleagues now included G. H. Lewes, Savage Landor, W. E. Forster, George Eliot, T. Ballantyne, and other well-known writers. His more advanced friends were ill-natured about it, and he began to experience those venomous and petty criticisms from colleagues with which some reformers spread thorns in the path of other reformers. As a rule he took no notice, and each attack provoked fresh appreciation. Harriet Martineau answered one attack, by W. J. Linton, which Lloyd Garrison was so ill-advised as to insert in the *Liberator*. "I find myself always morally the better for the noble spirit of the man," she wrote of Holyoake.

The *Leader* was mainly political, in the broad sense, and Holyoake continued his more philosophical gospel in the *Reasoner*, to which Harriet Martineau referred. At the same time he made frequent visits to the provinces to lecture to the survivors of the old Owenite movement. He began to hold debates with clergymen, and the pages of his journal told many a racy story of his travels. Provincial papers made ridiculous comments on his debates. We have had, said the *Newcastle Chronicle*, "a succession of low, scurrilous vagabonds, too lazy to work and too illiterate to earn an honourable livelihood." It resented this outpour from "the inexhaustible channels of vice and immorality in the metropolis." One may doubt if any public man ever dealt with these scandalous and ignorant attacks as Holyoake did. He generally

called on the editor, had a polite conversation with him, and let him discover that "the cockney Atheist" was a gentleman. As to the charge that his debates were very profitable, it need be stated only that the seats cost from a penny to threepence each, and that the man who was "too illiterate to earn an honourable livelihood" had, as I said, turned down an offer from Sir Joshua Walmsley.

Holyoake felt that these scattered and nameless societies ought to be united in some new organization and labelled afresh. The word "Atheist" appealed to him no longer. To say, as some of his later critics said, that he dropped the name because it brought odium upon one is simply untruthful. He abandoned it because it was a negative word, and we saw that Holyoake's primary concern all his life was positive culture. How little there is in the taunt is seen from the fact that he first proposed to style himself a "Netheist," but abandoned that when some one pointed out to him that it was equally negative.

He wanted to describe what he was, not what he declined to be: to induce in his followers a positive educational spirit akin to the old Owenism. The ideal in his mind was, as I said, always the broad Owenite ideal which he had inherited. The whole man, the whole race, must be cultivated in every respect. Theology, he thought, was a distraction; but you have only just begun your task when you have put an end to a distraction. Thinking over the subject, he concluded that, since his characteristic was that he wanted men to give all their devotion to the problems of *this* world (*sæculum*)—since theologians had already drawn the distinction between "secular" matters and religious matters—"Secularist" was the best name to adopt. He began to use it towards the close of 1851. In 1852

it was generally adopted by the little societies to which he lectured, and five years later there were no less than thirty-five such societies. He had founded "Secularism." From the start he meant precisely what he said. He was not giving Atheism a more respectable name. He invited Theists to join his society; and I find that of his nineteen new lectures in 1851 only six were concerned with the criticism of theology.

The subject would not, however, be complete unless we saw how his Secularist activity gave rise to calumnies from less successful colleagues, just as his political action did. On May 26, 1853, a distinguished company met in the Freemasons' Tavern at London to make a presentation to him. He received a cheque for £250. Again he refused to apply a penny of it to his personal comfort. With £50 he had started a paper. With £250 he would found an institution, a metropolitan home for the new body. He offered to buy the small printing and publishing business of James Watson. It was worth about £100; but Watson claimed and obtained £350; and he promptly became a critic of Holyoake. At the end of 1853 Holyoake transferred the business to Fleet Street (No. 147, now The Press Restaurant), and the luxury of his new position cost him £720 and loaded him with debt.

He contracted debt the more easily as a wealthy admirer had made a will bequeathing £30,000 to him on behalf of his movement. And one day in 1855 this man invited him to tea, together with a rival lecturer, Robert Cooper, and put the will in the fire. The money was transferred to Cooper. Holyoake learned in the course of time that one of his shopmen, named Young, had supplied Cooper with the untruths by means of which Cooper had libelled him. Young was a Christian whom Holyoake had befriended, and who had borrowed or appropriated

£101 of Holyoake's money and decamped. It was then that he had approached Cooper. Holyoake, who would never take an oath, could not prosecute. But the strange behaviour of the "cockney Atheist" did not end there. Two years later Robert Cooper was in difficulties, and Holyoake appealed for subscriptions for him in his paper. Young, in the same year, sought to enter the Unitarian ministry, and he found the way barred by his known appropriation of Holyoake's money. Holyoake thereupon accepted £50 10s. to enable Young to become a minister, and took the rest of the debt on his own shoulders.

We do not wonder that his more comfortable friends rallied to him. John Stuart Mill was generous to him. Mr. Ross, the famous maker of microscopes, gave him £250. Mr. Birch gave him £200. But his troubles were not yet over. Before the end of the same year (1857) another employee, Thomas Wilks, departed with the books of the business and claimed £154 out of debts due to the firm. Of the man's claim it is enough to say that, when the matter was taken to court, it was officially described as "false and fraudulent." But Holyoake has been blamed for allowing it to go to court. He was unwilling to take an oath, it is said, but he was quite willing to send his brother Austin to take an oath for him. In 1857, however, Austin Holyoake was a partner in the "Fleet Street House" and publishing business, and he did not need his brother's pressure to secure his interests. It is obvious that his attendance at court would have been useless unless he were a partner. Moreover, he was not then an Atheist, and had no scruple about taking an oath. He easily vindicated the claim of the business; but for years afterwards Holyoake had to sustain the rancour of his opponents.

Once more he became very ill, and friends insisted on

taking care of him. Allsop sent him to Paris for a change. Joseph Cowen, of Newcastle, entertained him in the north for several weeks. His admirers presented him with a cheque for £642 in August, 1858, and £500 in 1860; and with this he cleared the Fleet Street House of debt. His critics had sourly reminded him from time to time that he had promised to give the House to the movement. Had he done so while it was encumbered with heavy debts they would, of course, have been more critical than ever. Now that it was clear of debt he made it over to the Secularist body. His brother Austin acquired the printing and publishing business, and he found himself at last free.

IV

PATRIARCH OF THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

HOLYOAKE'S activity during these decades was gigantic. He had inherited the Owenite ideal in all its breadth, and the time had now come when a score of special movements were dividing the work among them. It was inevitable that he should work in each of these movements. His paper was the chief chronicle of their progress, and his voice and pen were always at their command. They might fail—he had seen twenty or thirty progressive movements fail in his twenty years of public life—but it would not be because he refused them a few of his crowded hours. Week by week the *Reasoner* reflected their fortunes; and his unpublished Diary tells far more about his industry than is found in the printed pages.

Take, for example, the woman movement. Owen, with his broad and free outlook on all questions, had at once pronounced against the existing injustices to woman. Holyoake sustained the tradition. Round him gathered the little band of early pioneers of the struggle. Harriet Martineau admired him enthusiastically. In a private letter to him she writes:—

I always read the *Reasoner*, every line of it. You must allow me to thank you, in the name of everything that is wise and good, for the glorious temper you manifest towards foe and friend. Great as is your ability, one almost loses sight of it in the charm of your temper.

Miss Collet, Mme. Venturi, Mme. Bodichon, and many other ladies who were in one way or other fighting for woman's right to personality were little less friendly with him. Miss Bessie Rayner Parkes, who was a descendant of Priestley and became afterwards Mme. Belloc (mother of Mr. Hilaire Belloc), was a warm friend of his and a contributor to the *Reasoner*, of which she distributed copies generously. In 1847 Holyoake suggested that women ought to have a paper of their own, and call it *Woman's Journal*. It appeared, with Miss Parkes as editor, in 1857. In the same year Holyoake offered himself as parliamentary candidate at the Tower Hamlets. He withdrew his candidature in favour of another man, but he had published his programme, and it included a defence of the Bill, which was then before the House, to give married women the secure ownership of their property.

Another item of his programme was the proposal to open the museums on Sundays. Few people doubt to-day that, since large numbers will not go to church, it was decidedly better to give them on Sundays some alternative to the public-house. In the fifties press and pulpit thundered against this profane proposal to let people study Velasquez or the Parthenon sculptures on Sunday afternoons, and few besides the Secularists dared advocate it. But Holyoake did not confine himself to idealist uses of Sunday. People who rejected the creeds had the right to use Sunday as they pleased; indeed, all would be better for a free and healthy use of the day of leisure. The metropolitan Sunday was so hideous and stupid that Dickens, in his memorable and bitter picture of it in *Little Dorrit* (chap. iii), says that "the ugly South Sea gods in the British Museum might have supposed themselves at home again." Holyoake arranged excursions for his friends, and when the Sunday League

was founded in 1856 he at once became its chronicler and chief supporter in the *Reasoner*.

We shall see more important aspects of his activity in the next chapter. Here we may confine ourselves to one of especial interest because, while the enterprise he fostered was one which seemed foredoomed to failure and hardly any other writer in England would notice it, Holyoake's loyalty to it was rewarded by seeing it grow, before he died, into one of the greatest social enterprises of modern times. I mean the Co-operative Movement.

The princely building which the Co-operators of Manchester have dedicated to his memory is proof enough that gratitude is a Co-operative virtue, yet one may wonder if the new generation realizes the solid grounds of the affection of the older members. Other men, of name and distinction, came later to patronize the Co-operative Movement, and to work very devotedly and effectively for it. There were quarrels and schools, and hard words were flung from camp to camp. In the main, in fact, it was the work-a-day Co-operators themselves who made their movement great. It was the dogged energy of thousands of men of the North and the Midlands, the men who served on committees and central boards. But Holyoake rendered mighty service, and a little record of it must be placed here to his honour.

The reader will remember that, when he lived as Owenite missionary in Sheffield, Holyoake often drank coffee with Ebenezer Elliott, a very popular poet of the time. Elliott, who is now forgotten, regarded Owen as a fool and Holyoake as a very worthy and clever youth who was momentarily dazed by the glitter of Owen's plans. It was therefore with a kind of amused annoyance that he found Holyoake borrowing one of his poems, mutilating it, and using it as a hymn in his Hall of

Science. Elliott was for land reform, and his poem ran :—

Behold ! behold ! the second ark—
The Land ! The Land !

For the second line, which is poor enough, Holyoake substituted "Coop-eration," which is (poetically) worse. But it shows us that Co-operation was a dominant idea in his mind from the first. It was, in fact, one of the dominant ideas of Owenism. When Governments refused to carry out his plan Owen turned to the people and urged them to do the work by voluntary co-operation. His system came to be known as "Socialism," but it was voluntary Socialism ; and it was, no doubt, the bias against State Socialism inherited from early Owenite days which kept Holyoake estranged from it in later years. However, Owen's model villages were to be "Villages of Co-operation," and no word was more familiar in the oratory and literature of the movement.

The grand plan was, as I said, impracticable, but one feature or part of it was tried separately. The model village would include a model shop or store, supported by the capital of the consumers themselves. Owenites took this idea of dispensing with the capitalist and his profit as a practical possibility. As a rule, in their experiments they dispensed with money altogether. They created a centre in which a bootmaker could exchange his boots for a table or a bag of flour. These "Labour Exchanges" failed everywhere, but the idea of having a store without the need to pay so much a year to an "idle capitalist" long haunted the minds of Owenite workers. It was in 1843 that the "Rochdale Pioneers" opened the first store of the modern Co-operative Movement.

It needed very little research in Holyoake's papers to prove that he had more to do with the opening of the

Rochdale Store than he had ever professed. The general connection of the movement with Owenism was plain enough. Of the thirteen pioneers seven were Owenites; and it was these who had worked out the idea with their allies, the Chartists and the Weavers of Rochdale. They were, however, not merely Owenites. They were friends of Holyoake; and it was immediately after hearing a lecture from him that they made their plans.

In 1843, we saw, he was released from Gloucester Jail, and he went to the north to lecture. One lecture was given in the little Owenite room, now taken over by the Chartists, in Yorkshire Street, Rochdale. It was an Owenite lecture to "Branch 24 of the Rational Society." Holyoake has reproduced it in his *History of Co-operation*. One might suspect that the later success of the Co-operative Movement had coloured his recollections of the lecture, but, on looking up his paper at that time, the *Movement*, I found that he expressly wrote that he had gone north to expound "Socialism's benign and practical philosophy," and, even more pointedly, to set forth "Co-operative views." Half the Rochdale Pioneers at least, probably more, were among his audience. It is hardly fantastic to see in that humble picture—an immature youth, fresh from jail, expounding "Co-operative views" to a rugged group of weavers and other artisans in a tiny room, while the Lancashire rain soddened the grimy street without—the beginning of the vast popular corporation of our time.

Shortly afterwards, we saw, Holyoake was in grave difficulties with the heads of the Owenite movement. In the midst of his struggle came a letter from James Daly, a Rochdale Pioneer, expressing the approval of "Branch 24 of the Rational Society"; and five other Pioneers put their names underneath that of Daly. It was a fresh link between them. Holyoake followed the

fortunes of their store with keen interest, and visited it whenever he was in the district. He had seen forty of the Owenite stores rise and fall, and, although the Rochdale store had a different basis and constitution, any social student would have expected it to go the way of all progressive enterprises in those days. Certainly no social student gave it a word of encouragement for years, while Chartist and Radical leaders frowned on it. *They* were going to "flesh the sword to the hilt."

Holyoake alone watched it from a distance and saw it expand. In 1847 Leeds opened a store. In 1850 Derby, Bingley, and Oldham opened stores. In 1851 Manchester began. In each case there was an Owenite nucleus for the growth. In Manchester the enterprise followed closely upon a lecture by Holyoake. He now had his new and more respected paper, the *Reasoner*. From the start, in 1846, he had said that its aim was "the substitution of Co-operation for Competition." From 1847 to 1850 the *Reasoner* was the only journal to bring the growing movement to the notice of thoughtful men and women. In 1850 Holyoake began to write in the *Leader*, a much more important paper. He persuaded the editor to let him have from two to four columns a week in which, under the general heading of "Associative Progress," he kept a weekly chronicle of the advance of the movement. Through him economists like Mill were induced to take an interest in it.

At this point the Christian Socialists entered the arena. No Co-operator—and I am one—will question the very valuable services which they rendered to the movement, but the friction which they inevitably had with what one may call the "Secularist Socialists" has led to some depreciation of the merits of Holyoake, and I propose only to disentangle the facts from the unpleasant feelings of the time.

Maurice and Kingsley meant, and expressly said, that their movement was "to Christianize Socialism." Now, it was the essential aim of both Owen and Holyoake to keep the movement neutral, and the new departure was bound to lead to trouble. Holyoake, in his paper, welcomed them into the field of progressive work, but he politely regretted that they mingled so much theology with their human task, and they called this a "declaration of war." Holyoake had so little idea of war that in 1851 he was in correspondence with Lloyd Jones about his undertaking an agency on behalf of one of their enterprises. Holyoake was quite willing. Lloyd Jones found that his associates were not willing, and the idea was abandoned. There was, quite naturally, a good deal of mutual coldness and some open friction. One has therefore to read with reserve some of the things they said about Holyoake. It is pleasant to add that Kingsley, Maurice, and Hughes were more friendly with him in their later years. All their enterprises failed, and the Christian Socialist Society collapsed in 1854. After that date there was less ground for hostility.

In 1857 Holyoake published his *History of the Rochdale Pioneers*, and it proved to be not the least of his services to the movement. It not only had a wide circulation in England, but it was translated into French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Hungarian. Economists and reformers in other lands began to apply to him for information. Co-operative Societies arose on the continent, often in lands, such as Spain, where almost every other type of popular society lived under the shadow of the police. The Rochdale germ grew into a far-spreading European organization.

There was, as yet, no real organization in England, and Holyoake contributed materially to the formation of

one. In 1863 there were more than twenty societies in London and about 460 in the entire country. Holyoake and a few others called a meeting of the secretaries of the London societies at a coffee-house in Theobald's Road, and the outcome of it was the founding of the London Association for the Promotion of Co-operation. E. V. Neale was an honorary member of it. But a more important partnership was entered in the same year, which greatly helped to link the south with the more progressive north.

Until the early sixties the Co-operative Societies had no periodical of their own. There was a privately owned paper in the north, the *Co-operator*, which served as organ for the Lancashire and Yorkshire societies, and in the south Holyoake's successive journals served the same purpose for the entire movement. At this stage Mr. E. O. Greening started the *Industrial Partnerships Record* in Manchester. There is no need to recall to-day the spirited fight over profit-sharing which at that time threatened to split the movement. Holyoake and Greening and others, the "idealists" of the organization, wanted to preserve the original principle of the division of profits, which was gradually being discarded in the north. The new Co-operative factories were very profitable, and it was felt that the expansion of the movement was impeded unless profit was divided among the shareholders in the usual way. Greening and Holyoake joined forces, and in 1868 they brought out the first national organ of the movement, the *Social Economist*. Greening merged his own paper with it, and invited Holyoake to be manager and editor.

Whatever one may think of the merits of the dispute, it is satisfactory to a biographer to notice that, if Holyoake erred at all, he erred solely from devotion to principle. A separate Co-Partnership movement was

inaugurated, and with this in turn Holyoake was closely associated until his death. He remained, however, one of the most prominent figures in, and lived to be the patriarch of, the Co-operative Movement. In 1869 he attended its first annual congress. It had now the glamour of success, and orthodox economists gave it their blessing. On the platform were Mr. Fawcett, Mr. Mundella, the Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley, and the Earl of Lichfield. The movement had definitely taken rank among the great social creations of the nineteenth century, and Holyoake, who was elected a member of the first Central Board, must have recalled with pride the humble little gathering in Rochdale twenty years earlier. One of his causes had succeeded beyond all expectation. There were now 1,300 societies, with a share capital of two millions sterling and an annual turnover of eight millions. Nor was it one of the least satisfactory features that he now found himself once more a colleague of Lloyd Jones, E. V. Neale, and Hughes. F. D. Maurice died during the holding of the first congress. It was Holyoake who drew up the tribute to his memory which was laid before and passed by the Congress.

In 1871 a further important step in organization was taken by the founding of the *Co-operative News*. Greening and Holyoake sacrificed the little organ by means of which they had linked together the southern societies. The northern *Co-operator* was purchased. The entire journalistic forces of the movement were concentrated upon the production of a worthy organ; and no body was ever better served by its journal than the Co-operative Society after 1871. Holyoake drew up the prospectus of the new journal, and he contributed much to the earlier issues. The editor was an Owenite friend of his, Mr. Farn.

An unintended, but inevitable, effect of the union of northern and southern Co-operators was that the feud over profit-sharing was for the time intensified. Holyoake was never reconciled to the new idea that profits ought to be divided between shareholders and consumers. He and Greening, and even the editor of the *News*, held that the employees should share the profit. Mrs. B. Webb's *Co-operative Movement in Great Britain* rightly represents Holyoake as the leader of the "idealists," but is quite inaccurate in stating his ideas. The controversy is now closed, and need not be re-opened. I refer to it only for the purpose of explaining how it is that one finds occasionally in literature about Co-operation strictures on Holyoake, just as one finds them in the early Secularist literature. In both cases he was trying to secure loyalty to the original Owenite ideal.

The later history of the movement need not be told here. Each decade of his life Holyoake continued to render service, and recognition was freely given. In 1869 he was sent to the Amsterdam Exhibition to bring Co-operation to the notice of the Dutch. Twelve awards were made by the judges to English Co-operative Societies, and the British Ambassador, Baron Mackay, wrote to Holyoake: "Whatever England got at the Amsterdam Exhibition in Class VII—Co-operative Societies, etc.—it owed to you." In 1875 he published the first volume of his history of the Co-operative Movement, which ensured still further attention from eminent men. Mr. Whitelaw Reid regarded it as "an invaluable contribution to the story of the most significant labour movement of recent times." Lord Derby, a cordial admirer of him and of the movement, warmly praised it. Professor Tyndall read it with such interest that he offered to present a complete set of his works to the library of any society that Holyoake cared to select.

Gladstone, the Tennysons, Earl Grey, Lord Northbourne, and others, were making the acquaintance of the movement, and lending it the prestige of their appreciation, through him.

Here, however, we are travelling far beyond the present stage of my book. Much more work of an unpopular character would have to be done by Holyoake before statesmen and prelates would treat him as a social student of merit and distinction. We must go back to 1850, to the time when the most pressing work an honest man could find to do was work that brought one more blows than guineas, more abuse than flattery. We will see him again later in the sunny years of the Co-operative Movement. Let us return to the dark and stormy days which preceded the springtime of modern social progress.

V

A CHAPTER OF BOMBS AND PLOTS

THE institution which Holyoake founded in Fleet Street in 1853 was officially described as "The British Secular Institute of Communism and Propagandism." The title was a sufficient reply to the young Secularists, on the one hand, who whispered that he fought shy of an unpopular name, and to the political extremists on the other, who accused him of hungering for respectability. He followed his straight path in life, and heeded neither group. If Sir Joshua and Lady Walmsley, or Sir Harry and Lady Verney, cared to invite him to tea, he went. But there were placards outside his shop in the heart of London, and literature in its windows, which informed all who cared to read that this was the home of all the lost causes of Europe in those dark days.

The word "Communism" we must chiefly understand in the old Owenite sense; but Holyoake now met and sheltered real Communist refugees from the Continent, and he made no effort to disentangle their views from his own. The revolutions abroad had, as I said, all failed. Europe had returned to the days of the Holy Alliance, if not of Louis XV. By that time, the middle of the century, literally hundreds of thousands of men and women of Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy had laid down their lives in the battle against injustice since the fall of Napoleon. Tens of thousands of others were in 1850 living in exile in the dark and chilly northern lands to which they had been

banished. Half the progressive blood of Europe had been poured out on its soil. The old monarchs were as strong and autocratic as ever. The peoples were almost as ignorant, and quite as powerless, as ever. Louis Napoleon had duped his nation, and had become Napoleon III; and Napoleon III upheld the Papal States, and indirectly supported Austria in Italy. Russia drowned its rebels and Poles in blood, and helped Austria to attain the same comfortable immunity from criticism.

One can imagine the temper of the cosmopolitan crowd of refugees in London, and very many of them met in the room above Holyoake's shop which was dedicated to "Communism" and "Propagandism," or was known as the "Political Exchange." The wares exchanged in that historic little room, in the centre of Fleet Street, were curses, threats, and plots. There were Ledru Rollin, Victor Schœlcher, and Louis Blanc from Paris. There were the German Communists Weitling and Dornbusch. There were fiery Italians like Felice Orsini, Russians like Heinzen, Herzen, and Bakunin, Poles, Belgians, and Hungarians. When Fleet Street illuminated in honour of the close of the Crimean War the Fleet Street House put out a grim placard about the state of Poland. London swarmed with conspirators and counter-conspirators (spies of the foreign Governments). Knives were at times used as if men were at home in Naples. Spies even penetrated Holyoake's defences, and for years mingled with the cosmopolitan groups in the Political Exchange.

With Kossuth, the leading Hungarian refugee, Holyoake had little to do; and the experience, unfortunately, ended unpleasantly. Kossuth was essentially an aristocrat. He associated with none of the democratic fugitives from the other capitals of Europe. But he found Holyoake indispensable. Money was needed to

keep aflame the hidden feeling for revolt in Hungary as well as Italy, and Holyoake was the best man to beg. W. J. Linton engraved a large card, with guns and bayonets and martial flags surrounding the signatures of Kossuth and Mazzini, and British working men sent their shillings for copies of it. The engraving was once a proud ornament in thousands of houses. To-day, I venture to think, I am the only man in London who displays it on his wall. We forget the heroic days which gave birth to our freedom; and there are nations of Europe which, from their cynical remarks about England, seem to have equally forgotten that in those days of fierce persecution England almost alone harboured and protected their fugitives.

Kossuth passed to America, and in his absence Holyoake issued a volume of the speeches he had delivered in England. The one purpose was to keep the cause of Hungary before the British mind, for there was more risk than profit in such ventures, and Kossuth was a poor speaker of English. Unhappily the Hungarian leader, on his return, regarded it as an encroachment on his rights, and there was trouble. With Pulzsky, who had been Prime Minister of the temporary Hungarian Republic, Holyoake was more intimate. Pulzsky settled in Kentish Town, and Holyoake often visited him. The neighbours would have been astonished in those days if they had known that the crown and royal jewels of Hungary were kept in boxes underneath a bed in the cheerful little foreigner's house.

Mazzini also was by temperament aristocratic, and his mysticism and strong feeling for religion for some time kept him aloof from Holyoake. He had been in exile in England from 1837 to 1848. For a year his spirit had been inflamed by the setting up of a Republic at Rome, and now he was back in London, broken and

melancholy, his large dark eyes shining sadly in his pale, refined face. He knew Holyoake as an important member of the Society of Friends of Italy, and, as I said, he at length approached him, with Kossuth, to ask him to make a special appeal in the *Reasoner*. Thereafter he was more friendly. Though Mazzini was no Christian, he dreaded "Materialism," and he regarded Secularism as equivalent to it. He was, however, forced to recognize in Holyoake a type of character as fine and idealistic as any that his own ideas could inspire. Holyoake often breakfasted with him, and received some of the most interesting of his letters.

A "People's International League" was founded, and the slow work of preparing the downtrodden nations for fresh revolutions was organized in London. Meantime an interesting and important struggle was proceeding in London itself, and, as Holyoake became closely involved in it, we may consider it here. It was the fight for the removal of what were called "the Taxes on Knowledge."

Impatience is a virtue, but it, unhappily, often carries with it a disinclination to study the facts. As a result, many of the most virtuously impatient people of our time do not read history. They have no gratitude to the great workers of the last century and no knowledge of what has been accomplished. The great majority of the workers at the beginning of the last century were agricultural workers, and their condition was unimaginable. When Lord Shaftesbury, whose merits are grossly exaggerated in modern literature, pleaded eloquently in the House for the working women and children—he scarcely ever did anything for working men—Radicals angrily asked him what he proposed to do for the agricultural workers on his father's estates. He was struck dumb. But even the artisans and factory workers had, as we saw, a miserable life. Their children died

like flies in the summer time, and in the frequent periods of distress the sickness and suffering were appalling. They submitted, partly, because they were ignorant. By the middle of the century a larger proportion of them—rather less than half of them—could read, but the Government had a further check on their ambition to know the world in which they lived. There were a tax on newspapers, a tax on paper, and a tax on advertisements.

Men like Richard Carlile and Henry Hetherington had made an heroic fight against these taxes earlier in the century. By these men years in jail were faced more bravely than some of their successors will face a five-miles' walk, and there were hundreds to assist them. More than five hundred Londoners went to jail for selling Hetherington's *Poor Man's Guardian*, which refused to pay the tax. Holyoake was the successor of these men, and when a Newspaper Stamp Abolition Committee was formed in 1849 he entered into close co-operation with its ingenious secretary, W. Collet.

I need not tell the whole story, but the conclusion of it must not be omitted from even this slender record of Holyoake's great work. The *Reasoner* was not taxed. It was not a "newspaper." But the definition of a "newspaper" was vague, and Holyoake set out to give Somerset House such tasks in applying their own definition that they would be willing to drop the tax. In the summer of 1854 he brought out a very singular weekly, *The Fleet Street Advertiser*. It consisted of two pages. The first was blank; the second contained the same news every week, only the order of the paragraphs was changed. There was, of course, only one customer, the Revenue officer. Every week for six months six copies were gravely sold to him over the counter. It was undoubtedly a newspaper, and Holyoake politely

pressed the authorities to prosecute him. He had, he cheerfully pointed out, incurred fines amounting to £2,280.

The Crimean War broke out, and he conceived a bolder measure. He brought out a *War Chronicle*, and refused to pay tax on it. He was now confident that he would go to jail a second time. With painful memories of Gloucester, he kept a warm cloak and a little parcel of refreshments under his counter day by day. He would not allow an assistant to sell the *Chronicle*. He served every copy with his own hand. Still no summons came, and he again pressed the authorities to prosecute him. By this time they were thoroughly disgusted with the law which they had to administer, and the comedy kept Fleet Street in roars of laughter. "Diplomatic relations between Fleet Street and Downing Street suspended," Holyoake posted up, on the lines of a war-bulletin, outside his shop. He incurred, under the law, fines amounting to about £600,000. He was liable at any moment to lose his presses and stock, and pass into a fever-stricken jail for a long period. He *goaded* the Government to prosecute him. And in June, 1855, the Government announced that the tax on papers was abandoned. One need not add that Holyoake was not the man who reaped the profit of the cheaper journalism.

The hum of the conspirators continued in the front room above his shop. It was slow work, desperately slow work; and, in spite of all the lessons of history, some began again to look longingly to what they thought was the short cut provided by the knife or the bullet. Holyoake distinguished. War against an oppressive power he approved. If a monarch left his people no other outlet of expression than the rifle and gun, Holyoake was prepared to supply rifles and guns to such of

his people as would rebel. Assassination he did not advocate. He did not shudder at the very idea while there were such monarchs as Napoleon III. He knew scholars, like Savage Landor and Allsop, who then advocated the assassination of despots. But Holyoake knew that despots generally find successors, and he felt that such killing was useless and apt to recoil. Yet we now find him actually assisting in such a conspiracy.

Among the refugees from the continent who climbed his stairs at Fleet Street were a French medical man, Dr. Bernard, and a fiery Italian Apollo named Felice Orsini. Orsini's portrait, signed by himself, frowns on me from my wall as I write. He was evidently a living volcano. He had just escaped, in a way that the Count of Monte Cristo could not have surpassed and may have imitated, from a brutal Austrian jail in Italy. His speech must have been a flow of lava.

And one night Holyoake was asked to meet his friend Allsop, Dr. Bernard, and Orsini in a hotel near Westminster Bridge. It bore the very fitting name of Ginger's Hotel. They showed Holyoake two bombs—metal balls studded with nipples and filled with a deadly explosive. Would he take these with him on his next provincial tour and test them? It was important to know what kind of ground they needed to fall upon to explode. Holyoake promised, and he took the bombs to his home. One of the most amusing chapters in his Autobiography is the story of those bombs. He tells in his inimitable way how he kept them in his pockets in the train and gave a wide berth to other passengers; how he dared not leave them in his lodging at Sheffield, but took them to the lecture, and placed them in a bag under the table; how he tried them in an old quarry near Sheffield and sent to London a cryptic account of their success.

On January 14, 1858, Felice Orsini and three companions flung bombs at Napoleon III. The Emperor and Empress escaped. Ten innocent people were killed and hundreds wounded; and Orsini and a companion were caught and executed. It was another useless trial of physical force.

A reward of £200 was put upon the head of Allsop, who fled to America, and many letters, which I have read, passed between them. Allsop boasted of his share in the attempt, and regretted only its failure. He nowhere speaks of having deceived Holyoake. I found a letter to Holyoake from another Radical, Hodge, of two years later, signed: "A member of the old firm of January 14." No doubt they did not *say* to Holyoake that they meant to kill Napoleon III. They seem, in fact, to have spoken about the use of the bombs in the Italian rebellion. But a careful reader of Holyoake's works will see that he nowhere plainly says that he believed this. The three men who met him in Ginger's Hotel were men who believed fanatically that the fate of Europe depended upon the removal of the French monarch. Tyrannicide, which a great poet has advocated in our day, had still more distinguished advocates seventy years ago.

We may conclude from his chapters on this episode that Holyoake regretted having for once been drawn to the physical force school. But there was one respect in which he very strongly believed in physical force. When Governments like the Austrian, Papal, and Neapolitan truculently and bloodily prevented their people from expressing the national will, there was no other way of securing the fundamental rights of man. Under the British Constitution, he argued, there was no need for civil war. An educational campaign could secure the ballot and manhood suffrage. He was right, as the

event has proved. But in Italy rebels had only one weapon, the rifle.

At the beginning of 1859 the cause of the Italians still drooped. Mazzini haunted the British Museum. Garibaldi wandered despondently over the globe. Then Piedmont renewed its war with Austria, and Cavour authorized Garibaldi to raise a force of volunteers. Napoleon III again intervened, and for a time the new hope was dimmed. But in 1860 Garibaldi heard that there was a rebellion in Sicily, and he and his famous "thousand" took ship. The rest is history. The work went on until the tricolour floated triumphantly over the whole of Italy.

Holyoake became again a conspirator. He knew Garibaldi, a fellow Rationalist who had already visited London; and in the summer of 1860 there came to his shop a certain "Captain Styles" with a request from Garibaldi that volunteers should be raised in London. Within a month there was a "Garibaldi Fund," with Holyoake as secretary. A few weeks later the upper room of the Fleet Street house witnessed the strangest spectacle it had yet known. Hefty men from all parts of England were being enrolled there for service in a rebellion against Naples and the Papacy.

There was little danger in this conspiracy. All England detested the Papacy in those days. Gladstone had, in an historic pamphlet, exposed the brutality of the Papal and Neapolitan administrations, and it was impossible for Austrian or Papal agents to get any sympathy. As the war proceeded commanders of British warships gave groups of their men a few days ashore, and none asked where they got the wounds they brought back with them. When a Neapolitan cruiser on the coast got a chance of a shot at the Garibaldians an English warship would indolently sail between and stay

there. When Palmerston was indignantly informed in the House that troops were being recruited in London for service against a "friendly Power," he airily replied that he had no right to prevent any party of English gentlemen from going to see the performances of Mount Etna.

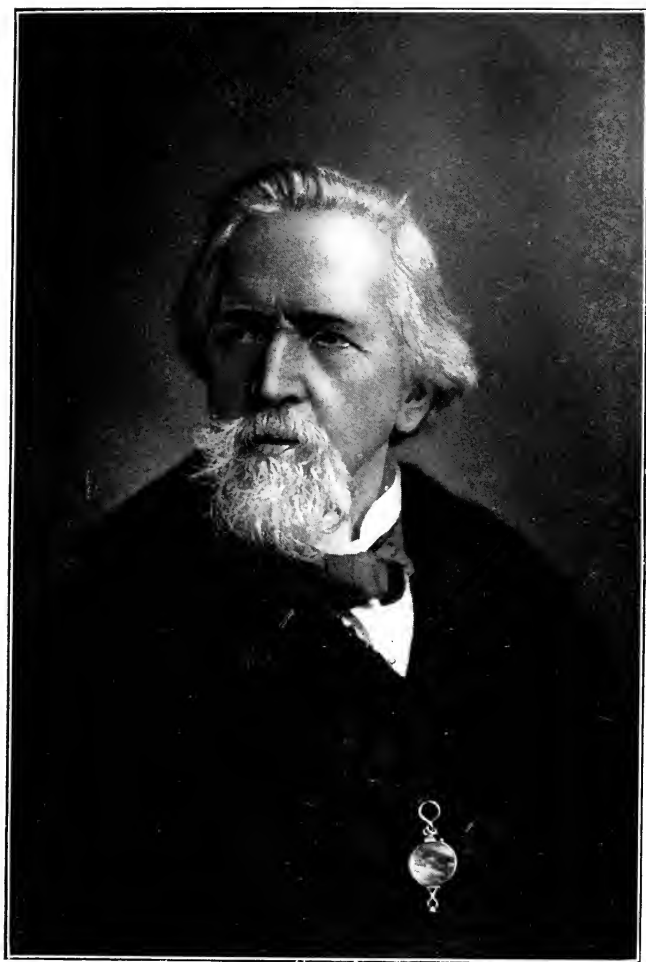
Holyoake improved on the joke. He distributed blood-red tickets to the "excursionists." As "the country was unsettled," they would be provided with "means of self-defence"; and, "with a view of recognizing each other, they will be attired in a picturesque and uniform costume." He had smiled at jail and cholera and bombs. He made a jest of war. Eight hundred and ten men were superbly equipped and dispatched; and they arrived just in time to show what Englishmen could do, before Garibaldi's task came to an end.

Unfortunately, here again he had sown vexation of spirit. The bill came to £30,000, and Garibaldi had to be called upon to pay most of it. All sorts of adventurers had been drawn to Naples, and quarrels were high and unsavoury. At the beginning of 1861 the volunteers returned, ragged and penniless, and stormed the Fleet Street house. It took months to clear up the mess. Yet before the end of that year we find Holyoake helping to found a "Garibaldi Italian Unity Committee" and gathering subscriptions for it.

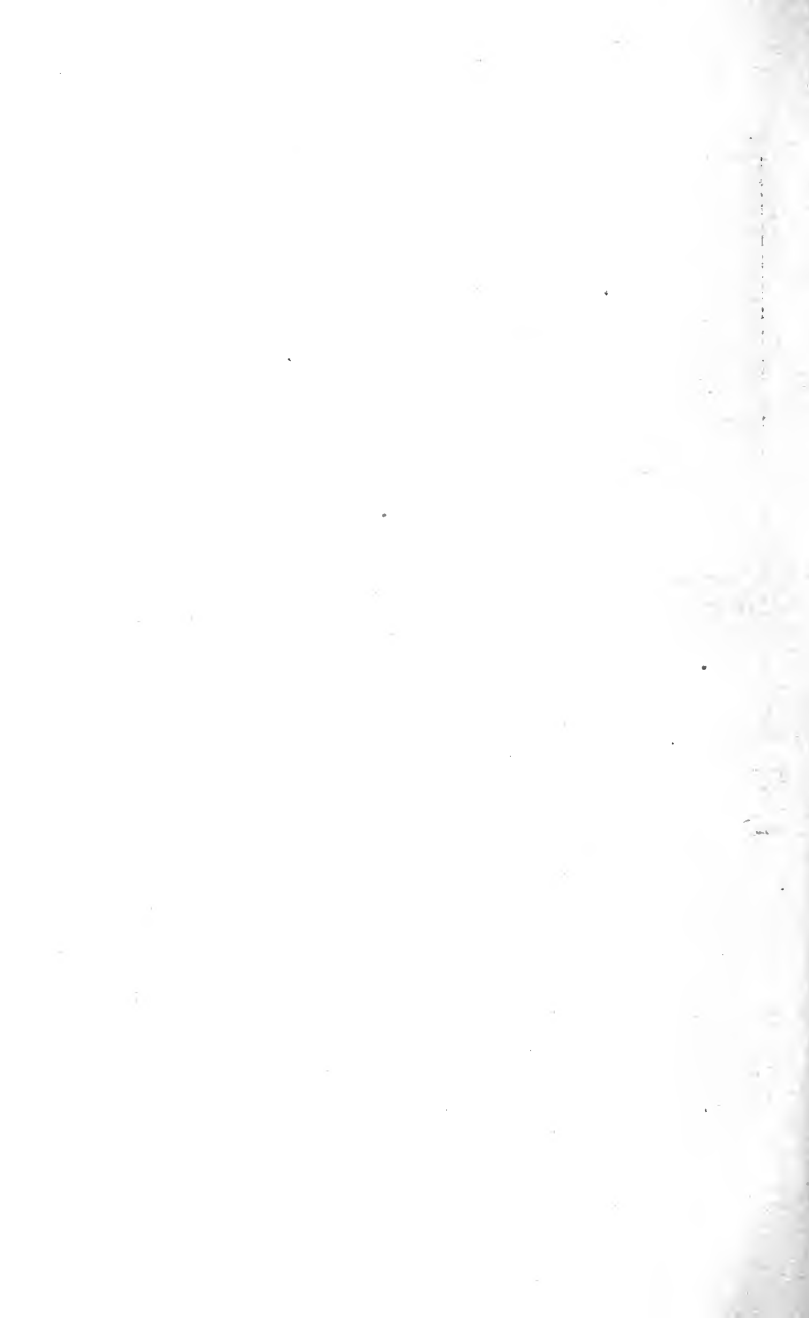
There was a further sequel. In 1864 Garibaldi came to England, and men remembered for years the mighty reception he had at Portsmouth and London. Garibaldi himself told Sir J. Stansfeld that "the person he was most interested in seeing in England" was Holyoake. But there was a sordid conspiracy to keep Holyoake away from him; as if association with the Secularist leader would be compromising to an Italian who scorned all Churches! Holyoake was nearly ejected from the

train. But the quarrel ended by Garibaldi suddenly, after a conversation with Gladstone, quitting the country. I have in my larger biography quoted some new documents on what was at the time regarded as an historical mystery. Joseph Cowen, Garibaldi's best friend in England, undoubtedly told Holyoake—I have seen the account, which was written down at the time—that Gladstone asked Garibaldi to leave. Even Lord Morley, in his monumental *Life of Gladstone*, endorses the current statement that Garibaldi was merely reminded that the strain might injure his health. As Holyoake wrote at the time, Garibaldi was in perfect health. It was frivolous. The key to the problem is secret diplomacy, not the nerves of a powerful and seasoned soldier.

Once more we have reached what we may regard as the turning-point of the nineteenth century, the year 1870, and we may briefly fill in the remaining items of Holyoake's record to that date. The *Reasoner*, which he had sustained for fifteen years, failed in the summer of 1861. His pen could not rest without some such entirely free organ, and a few weeks later he started the *Counsellor*. He was, of course, doing a good deal of ordinary journalism in this decade, but it was only in a paper of his own that he could expound the broad ideal of human emancipation and enlightenment which shone as brightly as ever in his mind. The new paper lasted only a few months, and he then joined other Secularists on the *National Reformer*. As friends had warned him, it led only to vexatious quarrels, and he gathered funds and established the *Secular World and Social Economist*. But his own world had now greatly broadened, and he passes into a new phase of social and political development.



GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE (1888)



VI

HOME POLITICS

THE course of events in the fifties has taken us far from the idea of the reconstruction of England with which Holyoake had set out upon his public career. For that we need make no apology. There was not a reformer in England in those days who was not deeply agitated over the miseries of Poles, Hungarians, Italians, French, and even Swiss and Germans. The human struggle went on in every land, but it was more acute on the Continent than in England. Conservative as Queen Victoria was, she would never have sanctioned the bloody and brutal efforts that were made in half the countries of Europe to ensure a return to medieval despotism. So Holyoake, by the force of his own principles, joined the splendid band of Englishmen—from Swinburne to Linton, from Savage Landor to Watson—who helped to win the final triumph over medieval corruption.

Unlike some of the others, Holyoake saw that kindling a resentment against injustice abroad was one of the best preparations for reform in home politics. For the situation in this country was still one of grave political injustice and corruption. The overwhelming mass of the citizens had no share in the control of their collective affairs. Corrupt practices at elections were almost as sordid as ever, and there was still no national machinery for educating the mass of the people and preparing them for self-government. When Garibaldi won his famous victories and sealed the doom of Austrian and Papal tyranny—when the sturdy Italian soldier came to

England to remind everybody how they had shared a struggle against injustice—the time had come to return to home politics. And here once more we get an interesting illustration of the distinctiveness and independence of Holyoake's personality. We shall find the man who had been chosen to test bombs for the foreigner, whose shop had been the meeting-place of the most desperate radicals of Europe, incurring the warm anger of the milder Radicals of his own country and being misrepresented as a friend of the people's oppressors.

The acute question in the later fifties was the extension of the franchise. Naturally, Radical sentiment stormily demanded the enfranchisement of every mentally and morally sane man in the country; though few then thought, as Holyoake did, that women had an equal right. Just as naturally conservative sentiment wished to keep the workers out of politics, and trusted that most skilful artist in camouflage, Disraeli, to see that, if any concession had to be made, it would be qualified in some way or other. One can, therefore, quite understand the flutter that followed among those with whom Holyoake had been associated in his foreign agitation when, in 1858, he spoke boldly in favour of a limited franchise. In a letter to the *Daily News* he pleaded that an "intelligence franchise" should be substituted for the existing "income franchise." Twice a year "Franchise Examiners" were to be sent to every town and large village, and every aspirant to the vote—man or woman—was to have a chance of proving his or her competence to use it. The subjects might be, he thought, political economy and English constitutional history. Those who passed the examination would receive a certificate which would automatically entitle them to a vote.

The proposal was greeted with equal roars of indignation and laughter. Holyoake serenely republished his letter as a pamphlet, an open letter to Lord Russell (*The Workman and the Suffrage*), and the anger of the Radicals increased, while the storm grew worse when Lord Elcho publicly espoused the proposal, and Lord Stanley (later Lord Derby) spoke of it in very complimentary language in the House. Sir James Stansfeld, who would presently be Liberal President of the Board of Trade, was willing to introduce into the House a Bill embodying Holyoake's scheme. So these were the associates of the ex-Chartist and Owenite, the fellow conspirator of Orsini and Louis Blanc and a hundred others !

Whether Holyoake's original proposal was "practical politics," or ever will be practical politics, need not be considered here. Many would now say that what was not practical politics in 1860 was probably too good for the times. In any case, the purity and soundness of Holyoake's principles are now clear to all, and his bold assertion of them at such a time was an act of courage and idealism. Holyoake had found himself confronting one of the deepest and most serious problems of politics. His opponents were, on the whole, as sincere as he. They saw only one principle : that it is the right of every normal individual to share in the control of the country. Holyoake saw another principle in addition to this : that the country has a right to be controlled by competent persons only. It is the dilemma that will confront every serious democrat until the obvious solution is adopted in every civilization—that the conditions of education and life shall be so altered that no normal man or woman shall remain so ignorant as to be dangerous.

In the later fifties and early sixties the mass of the

people were only slowly emerging from the profound ignorance and coarseness in which it had pleased their pastors and masters to keep them for a thousand years. I find in Holyoake's diary for 1862, for instance, that he was commissioned by the *Newcastle Chronicle* to report the "great" fight of Heenan and Tom King. It is an extraordinary measure of the general sentiment when we find a refined and delicate-minded writer able to follow the brutal and debasing spectacle which a prize-fight (with naked fists) then was. On every waste plot of ground—I saw it all in an industrial suburb of Manchester twenty years later—men were emulating the country's idols, King and Heenan. Wealthy and "educated" people flocked to these spectacles as they do now to their milder and less repulsive successors. Violence and drink were the seasoning of life. Any person who cares to turn back to the journals of that year, 1862, will find that there was such an epidemic of garrotting in London that it was unsafe to venture along Oxford Street unarmed at night.

So, for east-end and west-end alike, Holyoake demanded some proof of serious personality before a man should be permitted to choose a representative. There is a good deal of frothy rhetoric in the language of his opponents. At that very time, it was notorious, the great majority of the voters in England literally *sold* their votes; and a large part of those who wanted votes wanted to sell them (to get from five to fifty guineas at each general election). No one even questioned these facts. Many politicians, indeed, resisted reform mainly on the ground that it would make politics too expensive. Holyoake at least raised his voice in favour of a pure political ideal; and the pure ideal is in the end the only efficient political factor.

We must not, however, imagine that he was isolated

by his pronouncement. He remained during all these years a very active worker in the Reform Union. He was London representative of the Northern Union, and it was he who took charge of their petition against corrupt practices at Berwick and got a Committee of the House appointed. For an outsider to politics he had a singular influence, which was based solely upon a recognition of his character. In 1859, when Lord Palmerston wanted to strengthen his Cabinet by including John Bright, he asked Holyoake to approach Bright for him. In 1862 it was largely Holyoake's articles in the *Newcastle Chronicle* which secured for Gladstone his great triumph in the northern city. In 1865, when there was a general election, he gave considerable assistance to his old Christian Socialist opponent, Thomas Hughes, who was candidate for Lambeth, and to other candidates.

All the time, however, Holyoake's sensitiveness to real interests and principles kept him on the fringe of the political world, and made his position even on the fringe very personal and distinctive. In 1865 he was elected Vice-President of the Reform League, and there were few in it whose ideas were more substantially radical than his. Yet there was a constant muttering against him. He openly and amiably corresponded with bishops, the Freethinkers said. He defended and associated with peers, the Radicals added. Lord Elcho, sincere enough in his adoption of Holyoake's political ideal, but tinged by the atmosphere of his world, was reported to have said that "there was a large dilution of beer in the cream of the working classes." In a public-house this would have been hailed as a witty expression of an indisputable fact in 1865; but it was, of course, infamous to say such things seriously. Yet Holyoake brought Lord Elcho under his wing to a

Reform League meeting in St. Martin's Hall, and wrote to the *Times* in defence of him.

More amusing still, to us who look back dispassionately from the heights of half a century later, was an occurrence in the summer of 1866. It brought more vituperation than ever upon Holyoake from his Radical opponents (who were largely spurred on by personal enemies), yet it merely illustrates once more how inflexibly he held to his individual sense of duty and natural interest in spite of popular clamour.

The agitation for an extension of the franchise was approaching its climax, and the Reform League summoned a monster meeting in Hyde Park. The Home Secretary, Walpole, prohibited the meeting. The President of the League, Beales, with Vice-President Holyoake and a few other officers, waited on Walpole and discussed the matter. Walpole was a weak and wavering man, and he left the Leaguers uncertain as to his final word. Beales said that he allowed the meeting. Holyoake said that he reserved his decision. At all events, the League procession, with Holyoake among the officers at the head of it, marched upon Hyde Park on the Sunday evening, and London gaily gathered for the fray. Hawkers sold little bottles of "Walpole's tears" to the crowd, and feeling was very high. The gates were closed and held by the police. The procession went on in good order to Trafalgar Square, but the crowd tore down the railings of Hyde Park and made the respectable metropolis shudder once more in apprehension of revolt.

The League, led by Beales, turned the whole of the blame upon the detested Home Secretary, and there was strong feeling when the Government met the onslaught in the House by announcing that Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, Vice-President of the League, had been to the Home Office to testify that Walpole had *not*

authorized the meeting! The trouble was largely due to a postal accident. Holyoake had received notice to attend a second deputation to the Home Office, and had not received a later notice that the idea was abandoned. He therefore found himself alone at the Office, and, in his usual frank and courteous way, he told Walpole's secretary, who talked with him, his opinion of Walpole's words. But there was very serious resentment against him. It was said that he saved the Government. Shortly afterwards he sat on the platform at the Agricultural Hall and faced 20,000 fire-breathing Radicals. He attributes his escape from affront to the fact that he sat in company with John Stuart Mill; but there is plenty of evidence that, except as regards an unthinking few, he needed no protection.

It is a matter of history how the mighty agitation ended in one of the most curious "deals" in the inner world of English political life. Gladstone was forced to propose a measure of enfranchisement, and the secession of some of his leading followers like Robert Lowe (another friend of Holyoake, the Leaguers would notice) into their "cave of Adullam" broke his power and let in Disraeli. But no statesman could now live unless he granted reform, and in 1867 Disraeli, unblushingly throwing over his new supporters, extended the franchise and "dished the Whigs." Radicals were breathless. They had got all they hoped for, but they had got it out of one of the most cynical and insincere movements in the whole political game. And Holyoake, always serenely independent, wrote to congratulate Disraeli! In this case it seems clear that he had not taken time to study the situation thoroughly. One can only appreciate the personal feature of character which led him, as usual, to do what he thought proper in complete disregard of popular clamour.

But in the next advance of political improvement Holyoake took the lead. One of the roots of the profound corruption that still accompanied every election was that the voting was open. When you bought a man's vote for ten guineas you could see that he cast it for you. Tories, Whigs, and, generally, Liberals clung to this misguided arrangement. Gladstone stoutly refused to favour the ballot. Even John Stuart Mill and Thomas Hughes were opposed to it. The manly voter was to brave the anger of the world and assert his opinion openly. And so on. Holyoake delivered so eloquent a speech on the ballot that the League printed it (*A New Defence of the Ballot*), and the resentment against him ebbed. It seems, indeed, that he had some share in the conversion of Gladstone, and therefore in securing the great reform. He sent Gladstone a copy of the pamphlet, and he understood, and incautiously stated, that Gladstone, in acknowledging it, spoke favourably. Gladstone was annoyed, and repudiated Holyoake's interpretation; but within two years he openly accepted the reform.

Disraeli, with all his skill, could not long maintain the strange position in which he had placed himself. In 1868 he was defeated, and what came to be known as the great age of Liberal reform opened. Those of Holyoake's opponents who were quite sincere now expected him to reap the reward of his supposed adhesion to the "enemies of the people." It became known that Holyoake was going to contest a seat. Surely he would be a Liberal candidate and have the beneficent influence of the leaders?

Holyoake's conduct in this interesting phase of his career could never be calculated in advance. So it seemed, at least, to the majority of those who were interested in him. In politics you do not look for

simple conduct, and Holyoake's action was always simple. He was still, essentially, a Chartist, an Owenite, a rebel. To call it compromise or apostasy because he had dropped the simple "manhood suffrage" point of the Charter was merely silly. He had not, in theory, dropped it. He wanted to see all men *and* women enfranchised; but he wanted them fitted to do more than sell votes for guineas and beer. If bishops and peers approved his plan, he had no more objection than Robert Owen had had before him to friendly intercourse with them.

Those who suspected some sort of cringing to the Liberals in his actions were surprised when he appeared at Birmingham as an "independent labour candidate." He was one of the pioneers in that department of English political life. He opposed both Tories and Liberals, and called upon the working men of Birmingham and elsewhere to appoint representatives of their own class. The Liberals were, he said, "the master class," and could not be expected to legislate disinterestedly for the workers. "A democracy," he said in his election-address, "is a great trouble. The Conservative is enraged to have this necessity put upon him; the Whigs never meant it to come to this; and I am not sure that many of the Radicals like it." A heavy retort on the Radicals who had been accusing him of deserting the workers!

It was curious that even in this Holyoake was merely following the dictate of his own conscience. He had very little support among the working men of Birmingham, and he very soon withdrew his candidature. His words were not rhetoric drawn from him in the heat of a popular campaign. His best friends in Birmingham were middle-class manufacturers like Joseph Chamberlain and Jesse Collings, who would certainly not be

flattered by his description of Liberals. No doubt they were not disturbed by the menace of Holyoake. "At the General Election of 1868," says the leading historian of English political life—a foreigner, of course—"corrupt practices prevailed to a greater extent than at all the elections of the preceding half-century." The newly enfranchised electors sold their votes with a cheerfulness that made all the rhetoric of the campaign look tawdry. Both of the great parties bribed and intrigued unscrupulously. It was, moreover, the first year of the adoption of the Caucus by the Birmingham Liberals, and no independent candidate had the slightest chance. Indeed, all over the country the "friends of the people" were heavily defeated, and the enfranchised working men sent to the House of Commons the wealthiest body of national representatives that had ever yet sat in it. Disraeli, in spite of his defeat, smiled.

Holyoake did not find consolation in the cynical observations which it would have been easy for so sprightly a writer to pen in the circumstances. He did not hastily thrust his election-manifesto out of sight as if it were a piece of extremist opportunism—a common enough combination—that had failed. He published it as a pamphlet (*Working-class Representation*), and put in it even stronger language. He urged the workers to organize and create an election fund. They ought, he said, no longer to cast about for "a rich Radical," or "inane people with money bags about them," but choose their own men and put their pence together to elect them. Radicals now thought him as eccentric as they had done when he pleaded for an "education franchise." His supporters were Liberals, or even Conservatives; and it was no small confirmation of his belief that there were just as good friends of the people in those ranks—that one really could form a national party of men of

goodwill—when Mr. Somerset Beaumont (brother-in-law of Stopford Brooke) sent him fifty pounds towards his election expenses.

In 1869 a Labour Representation League was formed, and Holyoake joined the Council of it. He was at the same time on the Council of the Reform League, the Education League, the Financial Reform Union, and the Land Tenure Reform Union. He was busy in the Co-operative Movement, the Secularist Movement, the Sunday League, and other bodies. But he remained to the end an outsider to politics, apart from his journalistic work. He was himself quite conscious that, even if a constituency seemed likely to secure his return, there was a fatal bar against his entering the House of Commons. He would be summoned to take the oath; and an oath he would under no circumstances take. He must remain outside that inner political world in which men of his high ideals and character were most urgently needed. For the rest, we need only say that he became more definitely Liberal in politics as time went on. To the end he was for the Liberal-Labour candidate, not the "rich Radical." But the fine legislation, as he conceived it, which now came from Mr. Gladstone, egged on by such men as Chamberlain, Dilke, and Morley, made an ardent Gladstonian of him.

VII

THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION

HAD Holyoake not constantly reminded the world, by his championship of the class from which he had risen, that he had once been a manual worker, probably no one in London would have suspected it. He had not even the gift of boisterous oratory which so often lingers in such cases. In appearance he was always dressed as if he had been educated in the art of dressing; and his high courtesy, refined aspect and manner, and extremely cultivated vocabulary had not the least trace of having been acquired. He mingled easily with men whose names were known, or would be known, all over England, if not the world—John Bright, Chamberlain, Forster, Mundella, Dilke, J. S. Mill, Morley, Huxley, Tyndall, Tennyson, Mrs. Lynn Linton, Woolner, Lowe (later Lord Sherbrooke), Sir J. Stansfeld, Francis Newman, Stopford Brooke, and many others. Most of these were, of course, secretly or openly in sympathy with his Secularism, but his character outweighed his heresy in the minds of all. He rarely set out in those days to prove Secularism in words. He lived it.

At this period he lived, as journalists do, in chambers in town. Mrs. Holyoake and the family had a small house at Sudbury, and he joined them at the week-ends. His life was mainly public, and was full of action. He was parliamentary secretary to Mr. Cowen, at whose house he often spent the night. From among the journalists he looked down, day by day, upon the arena

which he would fain enter, but from which he was excluded by the idealist eccentricities of his opinions. Yet he was much more than a journalist, though he wrote regularly for the *Newcastle Chronicle*, the *Glasgow Morning Journal*, the *Echo*, the *Saturday Post*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *New York Tribune*. In 1869 his name appeared on a handbill with those of Gladstone, Bright, Mundella, Huxley, and Tyndall, to promote Workmen's International Exhibitions of an educational character. His suggestions always carried weight. The Foreign Office—as Lord Clarendon publicly stated, when it was disputed—adopted from him the idea of publishing special reports on industry abroad for the workers just as they did for the manufacturers. From him also the Home Office received the suggestion to have a limelight burning in the Clock Tower when the House was sitting, so that members (and their secretaries) need not waste so much time. In 1871 he obtained a knighthood for his employer, Cowen.

One of the first reforms to which the Liberals addressed themselves was education, and there was none in which Holyoake took a keener interest. It was now forty years since he had striven to attain an education in the difficult circumstances even of the family of a superior artisan. We saw how he had had to work twelve hours a day, and then burn the midnight candle in his attic over books of geometry and history. In the intervening forty years England had become the wealthiest, most powerful, and—we may say at least of that time—most advanced civilization on the earth. There was hardly a nation in Europe that had not oppressed and vilely treated its reformers, and the gates of England had been opened wide to them all. Yet the state of education in England even in 1870 was abominable. Nearly half the children of the country

between the ages of six and ten received no education whatever ; and what most of the others received was education in little more than the name, and ceased at the age of ten.

In the later sixties the demand of education was thoroughly organized, and the new Parliament was bound to bring in a great educational measure. That a national system of education would at last be created was taken for granted. What Holyoake was chiefly interested in was that it should be a purely secular system. For fifty years the Church of England had hindered the progress of educational reform by insisting on its own right to control it, and by 1870 the Nonconformists were so strong that a grave struggle threatened if the religious element were to be admitted at all.

The logical solution was secular education, and it may be said that in 1870 there was a predominant sentiment on the side of that solution. Holyoake lectured all over the country and found enthusiastic audiences. His private correspondence, which he invariably preserved, illustrates the period in a very interesting way, as it always does. The letters to him from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, for instance, are probably more accurate pictures of that statesman in his mid-career than any that have been permitted to dim the shining orthodoxy of his later years. It was not until 1875 that Chamberlain and Holyoake got into friendly correspondence, but it was mainly in connection with the continued struggle for secular education. Mr. Chamberlain was nominally a Unitarian, but the general tone of his letters to Holyoake in the seventies very strongly suggests that he was, like many Agnostics who felt it politic to conceal their opinions, merely sheltering under the hospitable umbrella of the least dogmatic of the sects. Referring to an article in the *Contemporary*, in which Holyoake had

scolded the Radicals for bringing Gladstone's term of office to a close, Chamberlain made friendly excuses for his party, and, apropos of education, said :—

You have correctly expressed the views of *Non-conformists* on the subject of Forster's Bill, but you have taken no note of the objections of Radical educationists, like myself, who care nothing about the sectarian quarrel, except so far as its continued agitation renders all progress, in the shape of a national system, impossible.

They became friendly, and in many later letters Mr. Chamberlain expressed a very high opinion of Holyoake. In a letter in 1876 he told Holyoake that one of his aims was "to wrest education out of the hands of priests of all shades," and he added: "This is really a branch of the Disestablishment movement, to which I am more and more convinced the efforts of all Radicals should now be directed." A little later in the same year Holyoake sent him a copy of the new rules of the Secularist organization, and Mr. Chamberlain assured him that he had "succeeded admirably."

These are elements of the situation in the seventies which later writers and biographers have somewhat obscured. Gladstone, at the same period, occasionally invited Holyoake to breakfast—more frequently at a later date—but Holyoake clearly understood that the great Liberal statesman was interested in him only as a social reformer and a fine personality. Chamberlain seems to have been in actual sympathy with his views; though after 1886, when the Irish quarrel occurred, Holyoake violently severed such relations as he had with Chamberlain. Sir C. Dilke was in the seventies another very drastic Rationalist and anti-clerical who counted in politics. He was a warm admirer of Gambetta and the Parisian anti-clericals, and he wrote on their

lines a short story, *The Fall of Prince Florestan*, which in later years he gladly suffered to remain in oblivion. Holyoake often dined at his house from the beginning of the seventies. Jesse Collings, secretary of the Birmingham Education League, was a warm personal friend of Holyoake, but a sincere Unitarian. He advocated the retaining of Bible lessons in the schools.

The whole Radical group, in fact, which supplied the "ginger" to the Gladstonian Administration was anti-clerical and generally in favour of secular education. But the Nonconformists themselves were in those days so eager for a unified national system of schools that they were, as a body, willing to accept secular education. Three hundred Nonconformist clergymen waited on Mr. Forster at Downing Street and asked him to make the new education purely secular. Holyoake tells us that Forster replied that there would be no Bible lessons in the new schools. But he knew Forster well, and had himself no illusions about him. He says that Forster told him, before he entered Gladstone's Cabinet, that he would not favour secular education. Holyoake's interpretation of Forster's "apostasy" is that he was above all things ambitious, and that he yielded to clerical influence in the hope that it would promote his political career. There is no bitterness in the suggestion. In 1875 Forster contributed twenty pounds to a fund that was got up to make a presentation to Holyoake.

The fight was lost, as far as secular education was concerned, though Holyoake and the Radicals maintained it, with decreasing vigour, for a few years. Holyoake himself was compelled to abandon it by a prolonged period of ill-health. Indeed, he was threatened with blindness, and had to have an operation on the eyes by Mr. Brudenell-Carter. He was idle for the greater part of 1875, and he was forced to realize once more the

inconvenient side of the picturesque work of a reformer—the hand-to-mouth existence which leaves him a victim of every economic accident and opens out the prospect of old age on very narrow means. As usual, his friends hurried to his assistance, and a sum of £2,254 was subscribed. Five hundred pounds were given him to meet his immediate needs, and an annuity of a hundred pounds a year was provided with the remainder.

He was now, we must remember, nearly sixty years old, and both he and his friends must have thought that the time had come for relaxing his strenuous activity and thinking of the long rest. None dreamed that he would live well into the twentieth century. For most of the men and women of his time he was already a veteran reformer, and he felt that his life was finely rounded and rewarded. He had seen most of the older men pass away with their dreams unfulfilled. Owen had died in obscurity in 1858. All his colleagues of the Owenite and Chartist movements were either in unknown graves or were entirely lost to the public mind. The men who had condemned him as wrong at every step were completely forgotten, while he had lived to see nearly every cause he had espoused well on the way to victory and the man who had espoused them treated with distinction.

To him now fell all the social honours for which ambitious men struggled in the metropolis. He breakfasted, lunched, and dined with everybody of note. The sculptor Woolner got him to meet artists. The Tennysons often asked him to tea. But we have incidentally named most of the distinguished men and women of the London of the seventies who were friendly with him. Mr. (later Sir James) Knowles knew as well as any man in London who counted or did not count, and he had little room in his life for

enterprising nonentities. When he founded the *Nineteenth Century* in 1877 he wrote to Holyoake: "I earnestly wish to be allowed to add your name to the list of my supporters." A year later there was formed the brilliant debating society which called itself The Association of Liberal Thinkers. Huxley was President, and the Vice-Presidents were Professor Tyndall, Professor Clifford, Dr. Kalisch (one of the finest orientalist of the time), and George Jacob Holyoake.

I have heard many explanations of this singular position of a thorough rebel in politics who dined with the most eminent statesmen, a thorough rebel in religion who had the high esteem of Gladstone and met prelates in great amity. "Compromise" is, of course, a customary explanation. We have seen how at each step of his career he followed his own singularly independent judgment and conscience, and left a shoal of critics behind him. But he made no compromise. He was to the end of his life an outspoken Agnostic, and he had a large share in organizing movements for the dissolution of all theological opinion. He founded Secularism in 1851, and wrote in defence of Secularism, in the precise sense in which he had first defined it, all his life. In 1896 he published his *Origin and Nature of Secularism*, in which his heresies were re-affirmed as strongly as ever, and he sent copies of it to Gladstone and to his clerical friends. As to politics, he held from the start the Owenite ideal that co-operation between the middle-class and the workers was possible and essential, and he thought that he found the practical form of this in the Co-operative Movement and the Liberal Party. He compromised in nothing.

More friendly and more truthful is the criticism that he was a "tuft-hunter." The only weakness of this as a criticism is that it is not a criticism at all. We have yet to discover the man who has done something in

public life which merits recognition, yet who declines the association with distinguished men and women that it would procure for him. Holyoake liked to meet them. They were not people with mere names or wealth. They were the outstanding personalities in a world of great achievements of every kind. And, beyond the personal pleasure and interest, Holyoake had a legitimate pride that the lowliness of his origin and rebelliousness of his whole career could be so honourably crowned, and the far deeper and more solemn pride of seeing in this honour no small triumph of the causes to which he had devoted his life.

He opened his seventh decade of life with a still larger and warmer experience of the world's new hospitality to reformers. We have seen that the British Foreign Office had accepted his suggestion of publishing reports on labour abroad for English workers. There was one aspect of this work about which Holyoake was not satisfied, and he found time, as usual, in spite of his strenuous life, to make disinterested research into it. He heard that America was already overstocked with labour, yet the tide of emigration was as strong as ever. As early as 1870 he urged the American Social Science Association to take up the matter. The Canadian and United States Governments, he thought, ought to issue an "Emigrants' Guide Book." It was again the vein of Owenism showing itself in his composition. Statesmen cared nothing what became of the emigrants who left them or the immigrants who came to them. Employers of labour regarded them only as material for selection. Steamship companies looked upon them merely as profitable merchandise. Scores of interests were against any interference, so it was not "practical politics." But Holyoake continued for nearly twenty years to press for this humane institution.

In 1879 he resolved to go to America and find out what the conditions were. From the start his progress was encouraging. Liverpool pressmen—chiefly Sir E. Russell—gave him a parting banquet to speed him on his way. He may have reflected on the time when he had left its quays for the Isle of Man decades before, and only an Owenite or two knew him in the great city. In America he expected no recognition. A few Abolitionists like Wendell Phillips would remember him, but he had no reason to expect enthusiasm. With Robert Ingersoll, the great American Rationalist, he was at that time not even acquainted. His old Owenite friend Hollick was now in medical practice in New York, and he and one or two others had been told of Holyoake's coming. But he had changed ship at the last moment, and he stepped upon the dingy quays at New York, and pushed through the mean streets of the lower part of the city to the nearest hotel a stranger in a very strange land.

Within a day or two the fact of his arrival was telegraphed to the one hundred and twenty-three journals of the United States, and he was amazed to find how well and honourably he was known. One fears that in this case Holyoake, being a journalist with a keen eye for the picturesque, had his impressions formed before he arrived. His letters sparkle with play upon the familiar (and quite unjustified) reputation of the Americans for energy. With his customary love of paradox in light writing, he said that he used to sit in New York restaurants to see the famous "quick lunches"; but that, although he saw hundreds enter and pay bills as they left, he never caught the actual dispatch of a meal. He pointed the sad contrast of John Bull:—

Like the oxen of Cuyp, he stands meditating on the

edge of his verdant little island, looking as though he was going to think ; but he is so long about it that the spectator never feels sure that he did it.

Seriously, Holyoake took a depressing view of England's commercial future in competition with America, but the statistics of the last forty years, down to the abnormal recent period, have not justified his impression of America's superior vigour. He was nearer the truth when he described New York as "a Paris taken to business."

A fine opportunity was offered to his lively pen when he was taken to the Republican Convention, at Saratoga, for selecting a candidate of the party for the Presidency. The distinction of Liberal and Conservative, which seems to us founded upon a law of nature, did not appear to fit American politics. Holyoake was delighted when an American friend explained to him that the difference between *their* two historic parties was : "The Republicans profess to be honest ; the Democrats don't." From the pantomime of the political meeting he went to the Convention of advanced thinkers at Chautauqua, and saw how dreadfully serious a serious American can be. Everybody seemed to have come with "an armful of first principles." After listening for a few hours, Holyoake retired to draw up a series of regulations for the conduct of the meetings, which included such clauses as—

That each speaker be allowed reasonable time for denouncing everybody and everything, and afterwards it is hoped that everybody will proceed to business.

That, if more imputation be desired by any speaker, the proprietor of the hotel shall be requested to set apart a Howling Room, to which all such persons shall retire, attended by as many reporters as can be induced to accompany them.

He liked America, and America liked him. In New York he was entertained at the Press Club, Manhattan Liberal Club, and Brooklyn Philosophical Society, and he made friends for life wherever he went. Wendell Phillips took enthusiastic care of him at Boston, and introduced him to Emerson, Josiah Quincy, Col. T. W. Higginson, G. W. Curtis, and all the notabilities. Colonel Ingersoll invited him to Washington, and became a most ardent admirer of his. Ingersoll was very much of an individualist in his work, and he had no very deep esteem for English Rationalists generally, but Holyoake's fine sparkling personality won him. His letters to Holyoake, for the rest of his life, were full of the most generous language. He saw that Holyoake had an opportunity of pushing his work on behalf of emigrants. President Hayes, General Mussey, General Sharman, and other leading politicians discussed the matter very sympathetically with him, and, as was the way of Washington—"the lotus-land of business"—did nothing. Holyoake went to Canada, and saw the Premier, Sir John Macdonald, who, being a Scotchman, was less polite and more attentive. In fine, after a ten weeks' stay, he received a farewell banquet of considerable distinction at New York. President Hayes sent a letter of regret that he could not attend. Peter Cooper, Whitelaw Reid, E. L. Godkin, Heber Newton, and many other of the biggest men in New York were among the eighty guests.

It was a triumph for one who was neither an orator nor a popular novelist: a pure tribute to personality and solid work. Holyoake gave many lectures on social themes, but, though his speeches had much wit and charm of language, he was without the robust physique and voice that he would need to address large American audiences. They appreciated his worth and his work;

and to him it was no small gratification to find that appreciation so widely extended over a second continent.

After his return to England he urged his proposals on behalf of emigrants more warmly than ever. Professor Thorold Rogers pressed the matter on Gladstone's attention, and Holyoake received a Government grant of a hundred pounds to return to America and continue his work. With his daughter Emilie (now Mrs. Holyoake Marsh) he covered about eight thousand miles of the United States and Canada, and in the Dominion he had the satisfaction of seeing his suggestion adopted. His older friends received him cordially, and many new admirers were annexed. A committee was formed to arrange an imposing banquet in his honour at New York at the completion of his journey, and he could take pride in the simple words in which they expressed the ground of the affection and liberality he had experienced among them :—

Your unselfish devotion to human interests, your wise moral and economic counsels, and the beneficent practical results you have achieved endear you greatly to us.

The reformer may, as a great American poet said, have his crown of thorns, but he does not entirely miss the roses.

VIII

IN THE MATURE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

CHIEF among his services to social progress in the mind both of America and London was his loyal work for the Co-operative Movement during thirty years. In much of his work he was, to the conventional mind, still "eccentric." He demanded political equality for women. He pleaded that arbitration should replace war. He pressed for an entirely systematic and effective national structure of education. He wanted workers to be co-partners in the industries at which they worked. In these and a score of other things, most of which are now or soon will be platitudes of a properly ordered national life, he was before his time; though he held on with the serene confidence he had learned from Owen, humanized by the zest of life which so markedly distinguished him from the great master of reformers.

With the Co-operative Movement it was different. Not merely captains of industry and politicians, but economists of the most humanitarian school, smiled upon the growth of the Co-operative Movement precisely because it was an alternative to State Socialism; and Socialists naturally (at that time) retorted with hostility to the Movement. We have to make allowance for this when we find Holyoake honoured in two continents, in spite of his heresies, as one of the chief pioneers and apostles of the Co-operative Movement; but it is only part of the truth. The Co-operative Movement, which is much more than a system of conducting trade on the

consumers' own capital, was a splendid expression of the new social idealism in the mind of a very large proportion of the workers. We may add that Holyoake himself did not agree with the Individualists in chanting the praises of competition. The Co-operative Movement seemed to him the ideal economy; no competitive struggle for individual gain, yet no compulsion.

Here again, as we briefly noticed in an earlier chapter, his idealism made him a rebel and a fighter within his own camp. Vast as the Co-operative Movement is to-day, few know anything about it except its own members; and many of the latter are quite at sea about the great struggle which was maintained in it for nearly three decades. Mrs. S. Webb has rather misrepresented it in her history of the Movement. The main issue was whether the original principles of Co-operation did or did not imply that the profit of any concern—productive or distributive—should be shared by the employees as well as by the consumers and shareholders. Holyoake held that this was almost a religious principle of Co-operation—one of the chief features which gave it some tinge of an idealist nature as contrasted with ordinary business. He and his friends were, in fact, known as "the Idealists."

In the Co-operative Movement the strife was long and, on the part of some of Holyoake's friends, bitter. But Holyoake was never bitter or malevolent, though the apostle of ideals is granted much licence in that direction; and he remained to the end one of the greatest figures in the Movement. He wrote regularly, and far more attractively than any other, in the *Co-operative News*, and he was a member of the Newspaper Board until near the close of his life. He edited the proceedings of the early Congresses, and had the remarkable record of attending every Congress but two until he

died. When he revived his *Reasoner* in 1871, half the paper was devoted to Co-operation; and at the annual Social Science Congresses, which he attended as he did those of the British Association, he spoke constantly for the new Movement. He was also a member of the Southern Section of the Central Board, and lectured for it in all parts of the country.

His position in the metropolis enabled him to render services to the growing Movement which few others could render. We have seen that so many distinguished people esteemed him largely on the ground that he was one of the founders and apostles of the Co-operative Movement. Through them he secured further goodwill and advantages for it. In 1869 there was an International Exhibition at Amsterdam. Mr. Somerset Beaumont, who often gave Holyoake money for special advertising of his Co-operative lectures, sent him to Holland, as many of the new societies were competing for prizes. The result may be told in the words of Baron Mackay (Lord Reay), our ambassador at the Hague, who wrote admiringly to Holyoake: "Whatever England got at the Amsterdam Exhibition in Class VII it owed to you." There were twelve awards to English Co-operative Societies.

Large numbers of influential people were interested sympathetically in the Movement by Holyoake. Gladstone, who learned much from him, said that he "looked to Co-operation as the new influence which should reconcile the mighty powers of labour and capital." The Tennysons frequently summoned him for a talk about it. It was, Mrs. (Lady) Tennyson said, "the great work of the world," and "we and our sons are honoured in proportion as we can help it." Holyoake's *History of Co-operation*, the first volume of which appeared in 1875, was a most important contribution to

its growing popularity among scholars and statesmen. It was, Whitelaw Reid, editor of the *Tribune*, wrote from New York, "an invaluable contribution to the story of the most significant labour movement of recent times." Professor Fawcett, Lord Derby (an earnest friend of the Movement), Mr. G. H. Lewes, and others, wrote to congratulate Holyoake. Professor Tyndall was so impressed by the volume that he offered to present a complete set of his works to the library of any society that Holyoake cared to name.

We of these comfortable and prosperous times for such movements are apt to underrate the importance of distinguished patronage of this kind. But as late as 1879 the Co-operative Movement encountered a danger with which Holyoake was particularly fitted to cope. Individualist shopkeepers were alarmed at its growth, and they succeeded in getting a Parliamentary Committee appointed to inquire into it. Holyoake at once offered to give evidence. Attempts, of a kind familiar in that crooked world, were made to prevent him from being heard, but he knew the ways of the House, and he had to be admitted. Lord Northbourne, a member of the committee, wrote him afterwards that his evidence was decisive.

In spite of the protracted quarrel about profit-sharing, Holyoake had constant evidence that he was appreciated. In 1882 the Congress was held at Oxford, and Lord Reay presided at the opening meeting in the Sheldonian Theatre. Professor Goldwin Smith moved a vote of thanks to the President, and in congratulating the British democracy on its comparatively peaceful development he said that this was due to its leadership :—

It has been led by men like Mr. Holyoake, who were not self-seekers, who were not demagogues, who had nothing at heart but the real interest of

the working classes, and who, when conflicts arose between employers and employees, were not for interminable war, to their own profit, but for peace with justice.

There was a conservative tinge in the passage which some may have resented, but, whatever injustice may have been done to other leaders, the just characterization of Holyoake fired the mighty audience, and the theatre rang with applause.

From the beginning of the eighties Holyoake had the deep satisfaction of seeing the Movement spread over the Continent—one of the surest indications that it met a world-need, and was no mere outcome of temporary conditions of English life. More than once he had discussed the Co-operative ideal with refugee democrats in the fifties and sixties; with Saffi and Mazzini of Italy, with Nadaud and Louis Blanc of France, with all who had a vision of something beyond the enthralling political issue. They were, for the most part, back in their homes when his little history of the Rochdale Pioneers, and of the sequel to that humble beginning, appeared. He sent copies abroad, and it was translated into French, Dutch, German, Hungarian, and Italian. It was a definite foundation-stone of international Co-operation.

France, developing its new and higher life after the Revolution of 1870, was the first country to have a large movement of its own. Relics of old Socialist sentiment—of Saint Simonianism and Fourierism and Communism—lingered in it, and crystallized round the new and more practical ideal. In 1882 we find the French Minister of the Interior consulting Holyoake about it. In 1885 he was proud to receive an invitation to attend the first Congress of the French Co-operators. He had found time in his busy life to acquire a moderate knowledge of French, and he at once accepted. He

went with E. V. Neale, and with him was appointed "Honorary President" of the Congress. He visited the Fourierist colony at Guise after the Congress, and struck up a warm friendship with its philanthropic founder, Godin. It was an almost perfect realization of the old Owenite ideal of an industrial community.

In the following year, 1886, he received a warm invitation to the first Italian Congress. "In this labour of concord among social interests," it ran, "you are a master having authority.....The Italian Co-operators ardently desire your presence, because you will be for them an affectionate and fraternal guide." The land of Mazzini and Garibaldi, of Giordano Bruno and the Renaissance! His blood quickened at the prospect; but it chilled again when he contemplated the journey, as it was thirty-five years ago, and his ignorance of the language. They would, however, take no refusal. "We want your presence at any price," they wrote. Neale offered to go with him, and he consented. He was now united with the Christian Socialists, Neale and Hughes, in the struggle for the idealist element in the Movement, and until they died he was a cordial friend of both. Neale had a character no less charming and elevated than his own, and the two veterans set out on the long adventure. Neale was seventy-five years old; Holyoake seventy.

Holyoake's pen was as lively as ever, and his descriptions in the *Co-operative News* were good reading. They ran through "English rain, French mist, Belgian fog, German haze, Swiss moonlight, and Italian sunshine." Neale was so useful to his companion that Holyoake was at last moved to write out an advertisement and stick it on the window of the carriage:—

Dismembered *Bradshaws* taken in.
Pocket-books neatly repaired.
Purses attended to.

At Monza they were to break the journey. Neale descended, but some blundering official sent Holyoake back, and he soon found himself travelling alone in a land of which even the place-names were worse than Greek to him. He had, for such contingencies, thoughtfully brought a phrase-book; and Neale had borrowed it just before he left the train. Voluble passengers gathered round the Englishman and discussed him. He took out a copy of the *Secolo* and pointed to the announcement of the Congress. A Co-operator present promptly underlined the name "Holyoake," and sympathy grew to respect. At last they ran into a large station, and found a soldier who knew a little English. They were about to send Holyoake back to Monza, when he bethought himself to ask the name of the station they were in. It was his destination, Milan. They put him out on the *piazza* to wait for a certain bus; and the reputation of England rose as the crowd saw him placidly produce the *Daily News* and a cigar, and sit down on the steps of the *piazza*.

Italy had now 248 societies, with 74,000 members, so the Congress was declared annual. But before Holyoake could return to the land of the sun he was to enjoy the highest Co-operative honour in his own country. In a letter of delightful sentiment Neale (who was secretary of the Union) informed him early in 1887 that he was to preside at the Congress that year. The honour was the greater as up to this time only distinguished outsiders—peers, prelates, or economists—had been asked to take the chair. Indeed, Lord Rosebery and the Archbishop of York were asked in 1887, and Holyoake was not a little proud to figure as third on such a list. He gave, as will be imagined, the oration of his life—"the incisive, brilliant, epigrammatic utterance of my friend Mr. Holyoake," Sir Wilfrid Lawson called it,

in proposing a vote of thanks. It was more. Naturally it took the form of an historical survey; an eloquent picture of Rochdale and Owenism, of the brave men and women of the dark early days, of the mighty structure that now spanned the land. He said little of himself; but the great audience rose spontaneously to its feet at the close and rolled out "He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

He had entered his eighth decade of life, and might well have retired on such successes. But he still travelled thousands of miles every year in the interest of Co-operation, lecturing and attending Board meetings: to say nothing of his other causes, which will be noticed in the next chapter. He wrote for the French, Dutch, Italian, and American Co-operators. He gave counsel to Horace Plunkett in his difficult early days in Ireland. Even the Japanese Government consulted him. Very fitly *Chambers's Encyclopedia* invited him, as "the foremost living exponent of the principle of Co-operation," to revise the article on the Movement for its forthcoming edition.

Journeys never daunted his shrewd and cheerful spirit. In the same year in which he presided at Carlisle he attended the French Congress at Tours. In the following year he added the Presidency of the Brighton Society to his many active functions, attended the annual Congress at Dewsbury, and set out in October for the third Italian Congress. "We venerate you as a master," they said, imploring him to come; and Neale and he responded. It was one of the most memorable and inspiring tours of his life. Count Aurelio Saffi, whom he had known in exile, translated Holyoake's speech to the Italians—"a brilliant speech that endowed political economy with poetry," the press said—and then took him to his estate for a few days. Saffi's wife also was an old friend, a sister of E. H. J. Crawford, who had

helped him with the Garibaldi Legion. At Lendinara he stayed with another old friend of the fighting days, Jessie White Mario. At Rome he saw not merely the world's central treasures of art and history, but the crown of one of the great combats of his early life. At Venice he met Browning and Ruskin. Fate granted him all that he had asked as regards Italy. And every year afterwards there came to his house at Brighton a festive cake baked by the Italian Co-operators; and, when he slept at last after the long day, his shroud was the flag of the Garibaldi Legion.

But he had still nearly twenty years of life before him, and for some time they were to be strenuous years. In 1884 the "Idealists" had decided to found a distinct organization, within the Co-operative Movement, to push the idea of profit-sharing. Mrs. Webb's history rather gives the reader the impression that Holyoake and his friends were a very fervent and small minority, whom the bulk of the Movement regarded as amiable cranks. The impression is quite wrong. The Labour Association for the Promotion of Co-operative Production (the forerunner of the Labour Co-Partnership Association) was founded by 250 delegates to the annual Congress at Derby. Neale was its leader, Hughes its chief fighting man; and year by year the most distinguished Presidents of the Congress spoke in favour of co-partnership. Neale remained secretary of the Union, and wanted no hostility. The new body was to be chiefly propagandist, though it would inspire the founding of workshops in which the employees should share the control and the profits; and any informed person will recognize here one of the most advanced Labour ideals of our own time.

Holyoake did not like even the appearance of disruption which the new movement bore, and for two years he took no prominent part in it. In 1886 he joined its

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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Photo by Mills, Hampstead

THE MEMORIAL ON G. J. HOLYOAKE'S GRAVE IN
HIGHGATE CEMETERY

executive, and from that date until his death he had a large influence on the fortunes of the Co-Partnership Movement. We need not here tell all the details of the great fight which enlivened the annual Congresses until 1896. Instead of being a small body, the Idealists dominated the Congress for several years, and got a resolution passed that the profit-sharing scheme should be recommended to all societies. Neale died in 1892, profoundly respected and regretted by Holyoake, and Hughes pressed for more violent action. He had all the pugnacity of Tom Brown to the end of his life, and Holyoake's correspondence with him is a constant and wise moderation of his ardour. It was a strange issue of things for the veteran Christian Socialist to find himself looking to the Secularist to keep the idealist element alive in the Movement. Hughes passed away in 1896, and the younger men decided to ruffle the temper of the annual Congress no longer. Co-Partnership became a separate movement, and Holyoake was its "Grand Old Man" until he died.

He was, indeed, now indisputably the Grand Old Man of the whole Co-operative Movement. Hardly a man whose name was well known survived besides himself from the heroic days, and he had a record of service and achievement that none could hope to equal. In 1891 he wrote his *Co-operative Movement To-day*, which was included in Gibbins's series of "Social Questions of To-day." In 1892, when the Congress was held at Rochdale, he addressed a great crowd in the cemetery, over the graves of Cooper and Smithies. It seemed incredible to the young that forty-nine years earlier Holyoake himself had put the Owenite germ of the Co-operative Movement into the minds of these venerated Pioneers. The Milanese Co-operators struck a bronze medal in honour of the Pioneers, and sent

Holyoake a replica of it. Another bronze medal came shortly afterwards from the Musée Social at Paris.

The crowning honour and consolation fell in 1895. The International Co-operative Alliance had arisen, and the first International Congress was held in London. Delegates came from France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Holland, Rumania, and the United States. England had now 1,730 societies, a million and a-half members, and an annual turnover of more than sixty million sterling. Earl Grey presided, and, in calling upon Holyoake to speak, he described him as "the Father of Co-operation." None would gainsay that; and it was a child of whom one might be proud. It would not be said of him, as it was said of Owen: "His good works were interred even before his bones." Earl Grey was a warmer personal admirer of Holyoake than any of them knew, and he was a judge of men. At the Crystal Palace in 1898 Earl Grey, after a speech, received a little pencil note from Holyoake congratulating him. The aged statesman wrote something on it, and asked those about him on the platform to pass it back to Holyoake. His message to Holyoake was: "I should be very proud if you would put your signature and the date to this paper—I should like to keep it as an autograph." But we shall see later an even stronger expression of his admiration.

One by one, as the century drew near its end, Holyoake resigned his active functions. He had never been a sleeping partner in any of the scores of idealist businesses whose executive he had joined. He had now entered upon his ninth decade of life, and it would have been folly to try to keep up his activity. Yearly, however, his striking personality appeared in the front row on the platform at each Congress, and his cheerful and carefully chosen words hailed the annual extensions of the Move-

ment. He had completed fifty years of service in it ; and to him it was a symbol of the more prosperous, more self-conscious, democracy which the labours and sacrifices of himself and his colleagues had brought to succeed the cowed and downtrodden people of his youth.

IX

THE CROWNING PHASE

IN order to give a rounded picture of Holyoake's intimate connection with one of the most successful creations of the new social spirit we have run on over several decades of his later life. The defect of this is that it does not represent the full activity, the broad idealism, the persistent element of courage in his life at the time. He was very far from being merely a Co-operator at any time. Half the world, indeed, thought of him mainly as the founder of Secularism. To others he was a shrewd and effective political worker of the Gladstonian school. To others..... But a more continuous chronicle of his days after he had passed the sixtieth milestone of his course will better show the fullness of his life.

On returning from his second trip to America he had many small proofs that the long struggle was culminating in victory. An amusing illustration was that the manager of some Turkish baths asked his influence to obtain a good position in America. "A movement of Holyoake's finger," a client of some distinction had told him, was all that he required. Mr. Cyril Herbert, son of the painter, asked him to help in getting one of his father's pictures accepted by the American Congress. Henry George, from the other side, requested Holyoake's aid in placing his new book, *The Irish Land Question*, on the British market. Froude, the historian, entered the large circle of his distinguished acquaintances as a result of the tour. Holyoake had visited Carlyle's

sister, Mrs. Hanning, in Canada, and had received from her some documents for Froude. It was the time of the unhappy squabble over Mrs. Carlyle, and Mrs. Hanning considered that Froude was right. "My brother was always for the truth, and so am I," she wrote to Holyoake. It led to friendly relations with Froude.

Holyoake's immediate task after returning to London was to write a biography of Joseph Rayner Stephens. Before the time of Kingsley there was only one clergyman in England who took any prominent part in the reform movement—Stephens. He was at first quite the ordinary type of country parson, a bluff Tory and Royalist; but the horrors of the factory system, which Owen forced upon the attention of at least part of the country, stung him into action. And there was no half-heartedness about his conduct. His language almost equalled that of Feargus O'Connor. Holyoake had known him well, and it was a labour of love for him to depict this singular Tory clergyman defying his ecclesiastical authorities and lashing the vile industrial system of the time. But the public had already forgotten those days and the men who had changed them. Holyoake turned to the tasks of the hour.

Had he been the man whom some of the more narrow-minded of his critics described, Holyoake would now have accepted the hand which respectability tendered him from every side and confined himself to tasks of which all approved. The broad Secularist ideal which he had inherited, without the name, from Owen would easily lend itself to such an adjustment of his life to the new conditions. It meant, positively, that men and women must concern themselves with the betterment of this world. Like the ideal of the wisest and ripest thinker of ancient Athens, Epicurus, it glanced at

theologies only as distracting systems which diverted energy from this world. In the full flood of constructive social and political work after 1870 a man might easily persuade himself that these theologies were no longer a real element of distraction. Clergymen were joining in great secular tasks everywhere. Bishops presided at Co-operative Congresses. Heretics were invited to the tables of the greatest statesmen. One could easily be tempted to believe that the real reason for criticizing theology had ceased.

It is an important part of the study of Holyoake's personality that he never at any time yielded to this very natural suggestion of a change of policy. It is the more creditable as he made very little of his income by Secularist work in the narrower sense. Unpopular work of that kind has usually to be done by men who do nothing else. It is the man who attempts other work in addition to it who has to pay the price; and nine-tenths of Holyoake's time was occupied with other things. But he would not abandon a task which he felt to be included in his duty; though it was still the most unpopular of all propagandas, and, curiously enough, it brought him more trouble from non-Christians than from Christians.

What sustained him most in this section of his work was the high esteem of Robert Ingersoll. Every man who was active in the popular Rationalist movement in England had a profound respect for the American orator. His judgment of men was decisive; his serious praise—mere compliments he tossed lightly enough—was a thing to win. He was not only one of America's foremost barristers, but he was a man of the strictest ideals and warmest sentiments. For Holyoake he had such admiration as he bestowed upon the few and elect. It will be enough to quote a few sentences from the

glowing letters which he wrote to Holyoake at times when Holyoake was being criticized by English Secularists :—

You are the model man. You are so kind, candid, just, forgiving, and generous, and withal so uncompromising, so perfectly true to conviction, so ready to do and to suffer for the right, so severe with yourself and so easy with others, that we cannot help admiring and loving you.....I know what you are, and how infinitely true—how unspeakably honest and brave you have been, are, and always will be. There is no living man for whom I have greater respect and admiration.....To see your writing on an envelope sends a thrill through my blood. I feel the grasp of your hand, and for an instant look into your eyes.....You have shown me such a great and generous heart—such a clear head—such serenity—such candour—such trust, after all, in the blundering world, and in even the accidents of this wondrous succession of stumbles towards the right.

As Ingersoll did not hesitate to write these things in American periodicals which reproduced some of the English criticisms of Holyoake, his opinion was known ; and to Holyoake it was compensation enough for the inevitable hostilities and meannesses which occur in every movement in the world where two or three strong personalities are more or less in a position of rivalry.

Narrow-minded people professed to be puzzled that Churchmen like Gladstone, and even bishops, avowed the same esteem as Ingersoll. It is really a remarkable tribute to Holyoake's character ; but it happens that just about this time he did something which very easily explains the opinion of Gladstone and others. I once heard an estimable social worker, but a man who had lived much among Holyoake's opponents, say : " Holyoake never did a generous action in his life." I have,

I think, recorded many, but the following incident of the year 1881, which I rescued from the oblivion to which Holyoake himself had committed it, will suffice.

Holyoake did not make the income which his considerable literary and journalistic skill entitled him to expect, and in 1881 he was approaching the fateful "three score years and ten." Some of his friends therefore represented to Mr. Gladstone that there was no more fitting candidate for a Civil List pension than one who had such a record of service connected with his name. The amiable little intrigue, if one may so call it, was proceeding quite satisfactorily when its promoters received a surprising letter from Holyoake. He had recently found his old Chartist colleague Thomas Cooper ending his days in poverty. Cooper had deserted early Secularism (with which he never entirely agreed) for a liberal Christian faith, and his name was constantly flung at Holyoake as that of the chief seceder to the Church from his views. He remained friendly with Cooper, and in 1881 found him living at Lincoln in great distress. He at once wrote to those who were pressing for an annuity for himself to say that it must be transferred to Cooper. He saw Mundella and Forster, and induced them to work for this. He then wrote direct to Gladstone, and, in a letter of singular delicacy, dignity, and self-sacrifice, represented that Cooper—"going out in his seventy-sixth year to preach Christianity, to which he is devoted, in inclement weather"—was a fit subject for a pension; and he positively refused to accept anything himself. He concluded:—

I have always taught self-help and self-reliance with the force of a passion. I always lived within my means. When I had none, I never had a debt. I have never appeared among those who sought anything for themselves, and, unless blindness comes

again, or decay finds me helpless, I should invalidate what I have taught by accepting public aid.

Gladstone read the letter at the next Cabinet meeting. One who was present told Holyoake that the Premier feelingly remarked that he had "never received a like one before." To Holyoake himself Gladstone wrote that "it heightens the respect and regard which I have felt for you ever since I have had the advantage of knowing you." A grant was made to Cooper; none to Holyoake—though he might never again have his name submitted to so friendly a Cabinet. Gladstone in time learned more that surprised him. He learned that Holyoake bought a large-type Bible for his mother in her later years, and used to read it to her. He learned that a clergyman at Harrow recommended an old lady to read the Bible, but did not provide the spectacles without which she could not read it; and Holyoake bought the spectacles. These things moved the Christian statesman to say something in a letter to Holyoake in 1897 that—Lord Morley will pardon me for saying this—is one of the best points omitted from his biography. He spoke of "the superiority to myself—and sometimes to others besides myself—in moral tone in persons holding (what I think) inferior beliefs."

On such things, not on any compromise—for Holyoake very plainly discussed religion with Gladstone, and sent him his most outspoken writings—was based the high esteem of Holyoake in the mind of eminent Christians. It is therefore unnecessary to speak at any length of the friction which Holyoake had with Secular colleagues. It is to his honour that, though every attempt to co-operate was perversely frustrated, and friends strongly pressed this fact on him, Holyoake repeatedly tried to restore Secularism to its original meaning. In the early eighties he collaborated for a short time with Mr. Foote

in the British Secular Union, but he found vulgarity permitted, and he withdrew. In 1883 Mr. Foote was, as is well known, condemned to a year in prison—a brutal sentence for lack of taste—and there was much grumbling because Holyoake would not sign a petition which asked for “mercy.” The phrase was, of course, merely formal; but we have seen that Holyoake would never condone insincerities even if they were merely formal. He wrote a personal and manly letter to the Home Secretary, Sir W. Vernon Harcourt, sternly asking for justice, not mercy; and in it he claimed that Mr. Foote had merely followed his own sense of duty. He afterwards spoke at meetings for the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws.

There was a sequel of some interest. The original charge against Mr. Foote had (wrongly) included Mr. Bradlaugh, and it came on soon afterwards before the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Coleridge. The moderation of Lord Coleridge’s ruling and conduct of the case surprised Rationalists as much as the pitiful behaviour of Mr. Justice North had angered them. Holyoake wrote, as was his custom, to express his appreciation to Lord Coleridge. He did this the more readily as he had used hard words about Lord Coleridge thirty years before in connection with another trial for blasphemy in which Coleridge had been prosecuting counsel. Lord Coleridge replied politely, but he evidently resented the suggestion that his conduct had changed. “I cannot,” he said—a strange thing for a Lord Chief Justice to say—“expect my countrymen to be at the pains to study the character of so very unimportant a person as myself.” A friendly correspondence ensued, and Holyoake found another eminent admirer. “The world would be a better place if all men were as fair and honourable as you,” he wrote to Holyoake. The chief interest of the matter is that

Holyoake throughout assumed that Lord Coleridge was a Christian ; and one can imagine his astonishment if he had read the life of Baron Bramwell in 1898 (after Coleridge's death) and learned from the correspondence of the two great judges that both of them had completely discarded "ecclesiastical Christianity" (as Lord Coleridge called the current creed) decades before. It would have encouraged Holyoake to work for a state of things in which all men could freely state their opinions.

In 1883 Holyoake once more dissociated himself from other Secularist leaders, and founded *The Present Day*, a monthly which ran for three years. "I know that nothing unworthy of the pen of a gentleman will be published in *your* paper," Professor Tyndall wrote, in subscribing to it. The aim was to preach Secularism as Holyoake first conceived it. Co-operation and other "secular" matters were discussed in the same proportion as questions of religious controversy. But the public which shared that broad ideal was small. "I have," Professor F. Newman wrote, "all along esteemed your uprightness, and believed you in your sphere to be a valuable worker and an aid towards truth." These select spirits could not support a paper. Holyoake's opponents were right in principle, if questionable in taste. Criticism of theology could not be blended with social work. The paper died—in the odour of sanctity—for Holyoake was gratified to find himself appointed an honorary member of the Cobden Club.

In the first month of 1884 Mrs. Holyoake died. When she had begun to fail Holyoake brought her to Brighton and cared tenderly for her. It was nearly half a century since she had put out with him in his frail vessel on the stormy sea of early Victorian propagandism. She had been proud of his success and distinction ; and on his part he had never attempted to make a Secularist of her.

She remained substantially a Unitarian, though she expressed a wish that there should be no religious rites at her funeral. Stopford Brooke was asked to speak, but was unavailable, and Holyoake conducted such a service as she desired. He read a page of the Bible—the conversation of the angel Uriel and the prophet Esdras—and a letter that Stopford Brooke had written. Then he spoke a few words, and Mr. Collet sang Harriet Martineau's humanitarian hymn, *Beneath the Starry Arch*. Another link with the world to which he essentially belonged was broken.

He belonged, that is to say, in his entire history to the fighting days before 1870, but one must not imagine him a veteran resting on the farm and living on recollections of remote victories. He was identified with every living cause of the end of the nineteenth century, and his activity was still very considerable. It was (1884) the year of the South Kensington Exhibition, and letters of his to the press secured a "refuge" (the first of its kind) in the middle of the busy street near the Exhibition. He was busy, also, agitating for the opening to the children of the poor of some fields belonging to Lambeth Palace. He was busy in the Co-operative Movement, as we have seen. He was, as we shall see, about to make a new attempt to enter Parliament. And in the same year (1884) he brought to a successful conclusion one of the agitations that he had maintained tenaciously for several decades, of which it will be interesting to say a few words.

Co-operators know that they owe many things to Holyoake, but few of them know, when they go to their annual congresses or on local excursions, that he was one of the great fighters for cheap travel. Trains, when they were invented, had been put on a level with stage-coaches as far as taxation was concerned. The tax had



in 1842 been reduced to five per cent.; but it was an infamous tax on poor people, and there was constant agitation. In 1844 the Government passed a "Cheap Trains Act"; but this merely compelled railway companies to run one train each day at a penny a mile, and it was to stop at every station. In 1874 the Board of Trade modified this, but its action was illegal. Holyoake and his friends formed a Travelling Tax Abolition Committee, and prepared their practised weapons. The secretary was Mr. Collet, Holyoake's valiant colleague in the "Taxes on Knowledge" campaign. Holyoake was chairman, and for ten years he worked hard at this unremunerative task. The tax on third-class fares was abolished—largely owing to Holyoake's private pressure on the Home Secretary—in 1884, but the Committee continued until the entire tax was withdrawn. Our generation is too busy to think of the men who did these things. The only recognition that Holyoake received was a free pass on the Midland Railway.

We saw that Holyoake's sacrifice in regard to the annuity was all the greater because at that moment he would certainly have received it, whereas the turn of the political wheel might bring in at any time an unfriendly Administration. As things were, he was highly esteemed by, and friendly with, Gladstone, Chamberlain, Forster, Childers, Mundella, James, Morley, and Dilke. The Liberals had been in power again since 1880, but the Irish trouble was just appearing stormily on the horizon. Holyoake followed Gladstone through every phase of it, except that, with his recollection of fights against force in the early part of the century, he never approved of coercion. It seemed, in any case, a suitable time for a fresh attempt to enter the House, and in 1884 a vacancy occurred at Leicester.

Holyoake was well known at Leicester, which was

then one of the most progressive towns in England. It was a busy Co-operative centre, and it had a Secular Society, with handsome premises, that was from the start, and remains to-day, "Secular" in Holyoake's broad conception of the term. These were not precisely recommendations to the general electorate, yet Holyoake was not mistaken in his estimate. Knowing that he would under no circumstances take the oath, he must have had a rather vague idea as to how he would enter Parliament if he were elected; and at that particular time, when Gladstone needed support, constituencies would not care for merely nominal representatives. There must have been some understanding which I have been unable to trace. The fact is that Holyoake offered himself to the Liberal Council as candidate. "If you think it worth while," he said, in his distinctive manner, "to assist in opening a door into Parliament through which a gentleman and an honest man can enter without shame and humiliation, I offer you my services." The other names before the Council were Passmore Edwards, J. Allanson Picton, Frederic Harrison, Joseph Arch, and Herbert Spencer! A Secularist and Co-operator—Liberal shopkeepers detested a prominent Co-operator worse than a Secularist—would have little chance, one would think, in such competition; yet Holyoake got fifty votes on the Council, and no candidate got a hundred.

He issued an election address, but left the matter there. His Liberal friends were clearly not disposed to have on their hands a second struggle over the oath. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, with whom he dined occasionally and corresponded much, wrote him: "Whatever happens at Leicester, I shall always feel the greatest respect for your consistency, courage, and integrity." Two years later Mr. Chamberlain dissented from Glad-

stone on the Irish question, and Holyoake spoke angrily of him as "the quick-change variety artist of the political stage." He does not seem to have patiently studied Chamberlain's position, and he, of course, did not know what we know to-day about the development of Gladstone's Irish policy. Chamberlain retorted by making a handsome subscription to the fund for purchasing an annuity for Holyoake in 1889.

His extant correspondence shows that Holyoake was more active in politics than was generally realized at the time. There are many letters from men who ask him to find constituencies, and from constituencies which ask him to find men. The conditions of the political world had to some extent beaten him. He *had* to find men with money; and at times his vigilance in looking to their other qualifications was deceived. There was an amusing case at Brighton. Holyoake seems for many years to have had his eye on Brighton as a good place for agitators to go to before they die. He often stayed there with friends, and he was interested in civic affairs. In 1882 he seems to have aspired to become a Brighton alderman, as there is a letter from a local friend saying: "I am very much afraid that you are not eligible for an aldermanship in our august body, as we only appoint those who know not how to do anything."

At the General Election of 1880 the Brighton Liberal Council privately consulted him as to the qualifications of a certain candidate. The financial qualifications were excellent, but Holyoake, as usual, made conscientious inquiries about the man. He was assured by Lord Morley (then Mr. Morley) that they need not hesitate, and the gentleman was elected. To their dismay the new member soon afterwards changed his political complexion, but retained his seat. Holyoake was now invited to help them to eject this "parliamentary presti-

digitator who was performing at Brighton in a patent reversible overcoat," as he put it. Chamberlain spoke, more plainly, of the man's "brazen impudence." For the next election Holyoake secured for them an excellent candidate in the Lord Mayor of London. The letters show clearly that the affair was left entirely to him. In 1889 Sir Robert Peel contested the seat for the Liberals, and Holyoake seems to have been as active as ever. "I really feel most grateful," Sir Robert wrote him after the election, "for your ever-present countenance and support, and for the warm-hearted sympathy you have shown to me during this arduous contest."

The Irish schism, the rending of the Liberal world in which he had seen the practical realization of his social ideals, detached him to some extent from political life. He made new friends among the Irish leaders, and was to the end a zealous Liberal; but the group of personalities to which he had been attached was bitterly divided. The right to affirm instead of taking an oath was won, but it came too late for him. One may doubt, however, if he would ever have figured prominently in Parliament. His gifts were not of the robust type that secures success in that field. He was not made for the world of "practical politics"; and after the close of what he regarded as the great Gladstonian constructive period, when the parliamentary game of "ins and outs" was resumed, he realized that the sphere in which he had worked, and still worked, was a greater and more inspiring world in the best sense of the word. He passed into the phase of reminiscences, of rest, of tranquil enjoyment of the reward.

X

A SUNLIT AGE

IN 1886 Holyoake married a second time, and he took the house at Brighton, Eastern Lodge, where he was to spend the last, and not least happy, two decades of his life. Neighbours may, as he was now seventy years old, have considered it a judicious retirement. Holyoake himself conceived that he had merely "moved into the suburbs." Every admirer of his must have read the fine work of Mr. C. W. F. Goss, Librarian of the Bishopsgate Institute, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Writings of G. J. Holyoake* (1908); a labour of love if ever there was one, and an extraordinary literary and journalistic record. Not the least remarkable feature of it is the volume and variety of work done by Holyoake after his seventieth birthday. And this vast amount of good writing was only half his work. He was, we saw, as busy as ever in the Co-operative Movement and the Co-partnership Movement; and we shall find him taking on half-a-dozen new committees or councils in the next twenty years. He took a keen interest in Liberal, Labour, and Co-operative affairs at Brighton, and founded a "Civic Centre" in which the workers in these and other movements might meet. We shall find him at the age of eighty wielding a vigorous pen on behalf of the pier bandsmen and their trade union. We shall find him near the age of ninety suffering the seizure of his furniture as a "passive resister" and haranguing a crowd on the beach over the iniquity of the education rate.

His admirers thought that the time had come to augment his comfort, if he would not curtail his labour, and the collecting-box was sent round once more. Dr. Joseph Parker, Mr. Thomas Burt, and Mr. Robert Applegarth were on the committee. They got £700, part of which was invested in a new annuity of £40. The Manchester Branch of the Co-operative Wholesale Society very generously—considering how often he had felt bound to criticize it—sent £50. The Victoria Dramatic Club (employees of the Civil Service Supply Association) raised £150 by a performance of *Caste*. Holyoake now told his friends that he would be ashamed to die within a reasonable number of years of their purchasing an annuity for him. In his printed thanks he said: "After seventy-two years of life a man becomes interested in it, and is pardonably curious to see how some of his speculations will turn out."

The name of Dr. Joseph Parker in connection with that of the founder of Secularism surprised many, but they were cordial friends, and the friendship did honour to both. We shall see presently how intimately Dr. Parker would write to Holyoake. The Rev. R. J. Campbell was then at Brighton, and he also was a friend of Holyoake. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was another clerical friend. Such friendships never restricted Holyoake's action for a moment. We shall see that this was precisely the most outspoken decade of his life in regard to religion since his early manhood.

Nor was there any shade of compromise on the political side. He was now definitely a Liberal, and a Brighton Liberal. Radical critics sneered. But he was a Liberal of a peculiar type. Once settled in Eastern Lodge, he opened the trunks of papers and documents which contained the story of his long fighting life, and began to write his reminiscences. This was the origin

of his *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, one of the most interesting and entertaining autobiographies, with the smallest amount of egoism in it, ever written. The title was suggested by Joseph Cowen, who accepted the little sketches which compose it for the *Newcastle Chronicle*. Holyoake was too drastic for Cowen, who rejected several chapters and modified others. One of the most amusing rejections—in view of the occasional suggestion of compromise on Holyoake's part—was that of a chapter on tyrannicide. When Cowen would not have it, Holyoake sent it to the *London Chronicle*. The acting editor was Mr. Adams, who had in 1858 asked Holyoake to publish for him a pamphlet on tyrannicide. Holyoake had refused; and he was now amused to learn that Adams thought he “put the case for tyrannicide only too well,” and rejected his article. Holyoake boldly published it as a pamphlet (*Murder as a Mode of Progress*). He had, in fact, so little idea of surrendering to the respectability of Brighton that in 1889 he outraged it by beginning to publish an “occasional magazine” with the title (anticipating Mr. H. G. Wells) *The Universal Republic*!

Curiously enough, at the very time when the veteran agitator was flaunting his Republican colours in the eyes of Brighton and the metropolis, his friends in the north were startled by the categorical assurance in a Lancashire paper that he had “embraced the Roman Catholic faith.” The strange rumour seems to have grown out of a reminiscence he had published in *The Present Day* in 1886. Among his papers he had, to his own surprise, discovered a card of membership of an Orange lodge. He had been enrolled in 1866, but could not even remember the circumstances. After thus telling that he was an Orangeman, he went on to speak of a friendly experience with Catholics. A friend had taken him to the house of the Catholic

architect Pugin, and he had given a small donation to an orphanage maintained by Pugin. With their usual feverish eagerness for "conversions," the Catholics had regarded this as a hopeful sign, and had collected £15 to pay for masses for Holyoake's enlightenment.

Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life appeared in two volumes in 1892, and ran to five editions. The shower of congratulations included more than one message that moved him. One was from Sir Henry Parkes, the great Australian statesman, reminding him that they had been school-fellows at the Birmingham Mechanics' Institute—"poor boys together on the streets of Birmingham," he put it—half a century earlier. Another was from the manager of the Eagle Foundry at Birmingham. There was now only one man left in it from the days when Holyoake had worked there, but all were proud of him. Another highly appreciative letter was from Carron Wright, the famous statistician of the Washington Department of Labour; another was from Professor Goldwin Smith in Canada. It was a long stretch from the Foundry to such honours as now fell on him, particularly by the road he had chosen.

He chose just this time for re-affirming the most drastic of his heresies—Republicanism and Rationalism. In 1887 he suggested to Mr. Brækstad, the assistant editor of *Black and White* (and later Norwegian Vice-Consul), that there ought to be a "Central Bureau for Freethinkers." In 1890, when he found a practical collaborator in Mr. Charles A. Watts, the Propagandist Press Committee was founded, with Holyoake as Chairman. He remained Chairman when it became the Rationalist Press Committee, and ultimately the Rationalist Press Association. At last he had found himself working in a movement for the criticism of theology in his own serious and refined manner. He

was Chairman also of the Liberty of Bequest Committee.

That one still had to make genuine sacrifices for such work he was constantly reminded. In 1893 he was elected an honorary member of the National Liberal Club. This was to him not only a considerable distinction, but a source of comfort that he no less appreciated. Holyoake himself never spoke of sacrifices—never pretended that, in his ardour “for the cause,” he either lacked the material comforts that other men had or was indifferent to them. All his life, and particularly in his later years, he did a large amount of work that was unpaid. But where a movement was fairly provided with funds he made it pay his expenses liberally. He lived comfortably, and had not the slightest desire to conceal from anybody that he lived comfortably. He had lived with the windows open all his life, and he disdained the hypocrisy of certain “apostles” who talked of their sacrifices.

The Liberal Club was therefore a very desirable nest in town. But the manner in which the honorary membership came to him reminded him that Rationalism was still a darker heresy than Republicanism. In the days when he was familiar with half the Cabinet, Lord Morley had proposed that this honour should be conferred on him. The committee had privately requested him not to press the matter at that time—Lord Morley told him that it was because of his opinions—and he consented to wait. Very rightly he, after waiting for some time, got the subject re-introduced, and he received notice that he was admitted as an *ordinary* member. When he pointed out that this was not the form in which he was nominated, he was informed (nothing had been said before) that ten members of the committee were needed to propose an honorary member. Within a short time the committee had the proposal before them once

more with twenty-three names (including that of Mr. Herbert Gladstone) attached to it, and he was elected.

He was a picturesque figure at the Club for ten years afterwards. Politicians whose memories went back to 1832 were now rare, and few could make reminiscences so entertaining, or had so rich a variety of experiences to tell. It was hard to believe that he had begun life as a working man and had mainly educated himself. Keen-eyed, his longish white hair brushed back from his ever fresh and refined-looking face, quick of humour and fertile in epigram, he always gathered a notable group about him in the smoking room. And he was often there. He still attended almost every meeting of the various boards and committees of which he was a member, to say nothing of more pleasant functions.

For a moment in 1893 it seemed to those who marvelled at his vitality that the end had come. After attending a meeting of the Co-operative Board in Leman Street he was knocked down by a lorry and taken to the London Hospital. He was sent back to Brighton and bed with his head swathed in bandages. This was on September 20. Five weeks afterwards the old man—he was in his seventy-seventh year—delivered two lectures in one day at Liverpool!

The person least concerned was Holyoake himself, for few men had become as accustomed as he was to accidents. With all his prudence he was constantly in some mishap. "I was never more mad than was necessary," he once said. He meant that no peril or price would hold him back when honour bade him go; but he took all his cautiousness, as to detail, with him. There is a fine chapter on his numerous cab accidents in his *Bygones Worth Remembering*. After a time he chose his cab with the greatest caution, and even wrapped himself in a thick rug to minimize the shock. Once he

chose a fat cabby whose weight alone promised to keep the vehicle right side up. The man upset him in Pall Mall. The insurance company refused to keep him on its books any longer. "Life would be worth living," he wrote to his friend Sir E. Russell, "if cabmen would let us try it." Once he was thrown down by an omnibus. As the horses did not kick him, he sent them "two bags of the fattest feeding cake the Co-operative Agricultural Association could buy." Who else would have thought of it?

The accident of 1893, however, affected his health for a year or two, and, unfortunately, these were years of renewed trouble with the Secularists. I do not intend here to discuss the merits of these differences. It is quite obvious that his character needs no defence. From the bundles of letters belonging to this period which he preserved I quote a few sentences penned by men whose judgment was objective and authoritative. The Rev. Dr. Robert Collyer writes him from New York: "Take care of yourself, my man. There was only one impression when you were struck off." Sir Wilfrid Lawson writes: "I have long thought that you are one of our few original thinkers and writers." Jacob Bright says: "I value highly your judgment." The Marquis of Ripon says: "I am glad to see your handwriting again." Mr. Isaac Roberts, the eminent astronomer, asks: "How many men living could show such a record as yours of work done and progress achieved? Long may you be spared to enjoy the fruits." Mr. Cluer, the magistrate, writes: "Your portrait hangs in our dining room, and I heartily congratulate you on your noble age." Lord Morley says: "I have admired your courage and elevation and singleness of mind all my life." "I wish we had a thousand Holyoakes," says Mr. Hodgson Pratt. "I hold your

character, not in admiration only, but in grateful reverence," says Dr. Joseph Parker. "On any day your beautiful present would light up the room," the editor of the *Athenæum* tells him. "I have not known a man of more unselfish purpose or more philanthropic aim," writes Mr. Justin McCarthy.

These are a few sentences culled only from letters of the period; and I might add Lord Hobhouse, Herbert Spencer, Sir Lewis Morris, Sir Joseph Ewart, and many others. But we have seen so much of this that even a biographer must blush. I would add only a tribute of so extraordinary a character—never mentioned by Holyoake before his death—that it would seem ludicrous if it did not come from the pen of one of the gravest and most conscientious of our colonial statesmen—Earl Grey. He was having a monument prepared to commemorate the triumph of truth and justice, and he told Holyoake that it would include figures of "the four men who have opened the eyes of mankind most widely to the truths of human brotherhood." The four were, he said, Christ, Mazzini, Owen, and Holyoake. He was dissuaded by Holyoake.

"Honour is the wine of age," Holyoake said. One rejoices that he had it in plenty to compensate him for the meanness of a few and to put a crown upon his fine years. In 1896 he was made a member of the Institute of Journalists, and of the Société de l'étude pratique de la Participation. He was invited to speak at a dinner of the London Chamber of Commerce. On the day before his eightieth birthday he had the greatly valued tribute of a banquet at the National Liberal Club, which made splendid amends for the timidity of its former committee. The letters and press notices that followed completed his pleasure. "The National Liberal Club," said the *Daily News*, "did honour to itself as well as its

guest.....he has lived to be honoured of all men." Sir Charles Dilke, though no longer the rebel of the seventies, wrote him: "I should have wished to have been counted as one who, any way within my power, would have helped in doing honour to one who so well deserves it."

Those who live into the ninth decade of life are apt to pass from autumn to winter. Holyoake did not. The few other survivors of old times wrote pessimistic things to Holyoake, and he sent back a little of his own sunny optimism. Even Dr. Parker wrote: "I am so lonesome and miserable at times as to be no longer a Christian; but the light will come." In Holyoake's reply we have the piquant spectacle of the aged Agnostic giving bright counsel and consolation to the aged Christian orator, as they both look forward to approaching death. I have noticed a somewhat similar development in Gladstone's later correspondence with Holyoake, but for these and similar letters I must refer to my larger biography. His days were full of work and wit. In a letter to Sir John Robinson about a man who had just joined the staff of the *Daily News* he says:—

He was Liberal two days a week, Tory two days, and mad the remainder. Do not let him impart these qualities to the *Daily News*. True, I read him in his mad days, from congeniality of temperament. But lunacy is not general among your readers.

To the Southport editor, Mr. W. Ashton, an esteemed friend, he writes:—

When a friend asked Douglas Jerrold if he had a mind to lend him a guinea, he answered that he had the mind, but not the guinea. I have a mind to write you a hundred pages, but I have not the time to.

But eighty years are eighty years, his friends reminded

him. Reluctantly he began to take more care of himself. I have spoken of his shrewdness, and no doubt his great age suggests that he was exceedingly attentive to his comfort. I have even said that he was, and I make no apology for it. He was a healthy man, and quite devoid of hypocrisy. But the impression must be qualified. Until well into his seventies he treated lunch, on working days, as a nuisance. He often made it wait an hour, sometimes two hours. His daughter and secretary, Mrs. Holyoake-Marsh, had to drag him to it; and, with that pleasant naiveness of much of his character, he tried sometimes to bribe her to take no notice of the clock. Once a compositor made him say some utter nonsense in setting up his manuscript, and, when Holyoake laughingly protested, he said placidly: "I thought it was just one of your quaintnesses of speech, Mr. Holyoake." There was the same delightful quaintness in his manner and mind as in his writing. He liked his tea strong. "Tea for two—water for one," he would ask in a teashop. "Goose for dinner," he writes in his Diary on Christmas Day, 1895. "Pain for breakfast," he writes the next morning.

In some ways he actually began his ninth decade of life with new activities. He was still on the Travelling Tax Committee, the Rationalist Press Committee, the Liberty of Bequest Committee, the International Alliance, and the various Co-operative Boards. He attended the Co-operative Congress in Holland in 1897, and wrote the history of the Leeds Society. He took up the Peace Movement more strongly than ever, and presided so vigorously at the dinner of the International Peace Association in 1899 that he was nominated a delegate to St. Petersburg.

One of the mysteries of his career is how he ever came to be accused of compromise. As soon as he became

a citizen of Brighton he lit it up with Republican propaganda. When he found himself looking down upon the faces of hundreds of prosperous manufacturers at the National Liberal Club banquet in 1896, he said in the middle of his speech:—

This world is not fit for a gentleman to live in while undeserved misery exists in the neighbourhood of his mansion. I am no Socialist, but I can see that honest industry is defrauded somewhere while it needs charity or State aid.

As to his opinions about religion, they became clearer and firmer in their negation as he grew older. In his *Origin and Nature of Secularism* (1896) he was just as keen on proving that Secularism did not mean merely concern for secular things as he was to show that it did not mean theological criticism only. "Secularism," he said, to the disappointment of his many clerical admirers, "*does* conflict with theology." He sent that to Gladstone and to Dr. Parker. But he had seen that concentration on criticism alone led to a decay of taste and character, and he pleaded for strong humanitarian ethical culture—indeed, general mental culture of a positive sort, in art, science, and morals. On the whole, however, he now looked to the Rationalist Press Association to carry out the critical side of his ideals.

In the last decade of his life he found, as we saw a new and deep interest in the Peace and Arbitration movement. It was, of course, the movement that was new, not Holyoake's detestation of war. From first to last he retained all the breadth of Owen's humanitarianism. But it was only in the last decade of the nineteenth century that a pacifist movement with some definite promise of achievement arose, and Holyoake worked in it as no other man of his age would. Hence, when the thrill of the first Hague Conference was

succeeded by the gloom of the South African War, Holyoake was saddened. He had lived to see a new century, and it opened with a war! Even now, however, his playfulness was not quenched. I find him writing in the usual vein to Mr. Ashton: "My mind is sodden with the rain. I have not a dry idea in my head. My conversation is damp, and would give you influenza." In May (1900), moreover, he had another accident. Trying to avoid a crowd at London Bridge Station, he fell over an obstacle, and the police sent him home, bruised and bleeding, in a cab. A week later he wrote a humorous account of the accident to a friend. He went out to post the letter and was knocked down by a cyclist. The man, it seems, had either to run down Holyoake or a lady. So, says Holyoake, "as I have always favoured the rights of women, I did not complain."

He ended "zero year," as he called it, so strong and cheerful that his nephew, Mr. Bottomley, who was then editing the *Sun*, handed over the paper to him for a week, and he came to town and undertook the full range of editorial duties. In an article at the close Mr. Bottomley assured his readers that Holyoake had done everything that a busy editor ought to do. The only departure from ordinary routine was that the bodyguard, which usually protects an editorial den, had to be doubled or trebled, to stem the rush of admiring friends.

In the autumn Mr. Stead took him for his character-sketch in the *Review of Reviews*, and he did full justice to the richness of his material. Stead disliked Secularism, and his verdict on Holyoake's personality is impartial. "It is probable," he said, "that there is no other man of eighty-four now living in this country who has so honourable a record." And his record was not closed. In that year he undertook new reforming duties. He became President of the National Democratic League

and Vice-President of the Land Nationalization Society. In 1902 he unveiled the fine monument which the Co-operators had raised over the grave of Robert Owen.

But the best proof of his vitality at this extreme age is his further collection of reminiscences, *Bygones Worth Remembering*. It took the form, as did the earlier work, of little detached sketches, because it first appeared serially in the press (chiefly the *Weekly Times and Echo*). His memory was as keen, his wit as sprightly, as ever. Everything he wrote was a tonic to his readers. He knew the early nineteenth century too well to tolerate talk about "good old times" and "modern degeneration." The world had, in every single respect, made incalculable progress since he had first opened mature eyes upon it in the thirties, and he wanted the workers to realize it. He was by no means insensible to the evils that remained, as his bold words at the Liberal Club showed; but he knew the mischief of idealism divorced from facts. Never in his life had he indulged in mere rhetoric, though he had a high capacity for it.

Bygones appeared in two volumes in 1904. Then the light began slowly to fail. In March he had startled Brighton by appearing as a "passive resister." Large numbers of Nonconformists were, it will be remembered, refusing at that time to pay their rates, and Holyoake, with a more comprehensive objection than any of them to the use of public money for giving religious instruction, refused to pay the education rate. The officials were bound to act, and they seized one of his pictures and put it up at auction. Holyoake gaily attended the auction and made a sort of speech to the bidders. Then a crowd adjourned with him to the beach, and he discoursed on the iniquity of making citizens pay for the teaching of the religion of other citizens.

A few weeks later came the first premonition. He had

an attack of vertigo, and fell. Still he did not take it too seriously. He attended meetings and penned articles. But his eyes were failing, and the surgeons would not attempt an operation. In the diary which he still kept, the entries begin to reflect a faint shade of resignation. He has to cancel engagements. The writing sprawls over the space; sometimes he has held his diary, while he pencilled in it, wrong side up. But his mind was perfect, and his serenity in face of death unclouded. There is an entry in February, 1905: "Felt often of late like one approaching the end of the world." Then his irrepressible humour gets into his pencil, and he adds: "But see no more than others what lies beyond." He had not, in fact, the slightest doubt what lay beyond—nothing. Those who think this a depressing prospect should read the full story of Holyoake's last years and compare it with those of a dozen others.

His three red-letter festivals now were the Co-operative Congress, the Rationalist Press dinner, and the annual celebration of the Leicester Secular Society. Not sadly, nor with the sternness of a Stoic, but with his own bright serenity, he cancelled all three for 1905. He was not going to be more mad than was necessary. The Co-operative Congress was to be at Paisley, and Scottish Co-operators implored him to let them "mark their appreciation of the life-long services you have rendered to the cause." He knew that it would be a foolish form of suicide. His duty was to wait at Eastern Lodge for the last opiate. The Congress sent him a splendid tribute from Paisley.

One great joy relieved the tedium of waiting. An election occurred, and he made a last effort to induce Brighton to oust the gentleman in a "reversible overcoat," for whom he felt responsible, and accept a Liberal. His candidate won by a majority of 800. He recovered

a little and went out in a bath-chair. Friends were amazed presently to find him writing in the *Chronicle* and the *Nineteenth Century*, and to hear that he was finishing his *History of Co-operation*. His letters, in fact, are almost as lively and vigorous as ever. "I am still a young man in my mind," he writes to Mr. R. J. Campbell, "and prize incentives to improvement." Mr. Campbell had just reviewed one of his books. Instead of reading Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus, or Seneca's *On Consolation*, he was re-reading Balzac and Boccaccio. In August he "ran up" to London, and took a last survey of the Liberal Club—"looking hale and hearty at the age of 88," the papers said.

One of his last articles was on behalf of women suffrage. After that there were a few bright letters in the *Co-operative News*, then even the diary is blank. His last lines were laboriously written in his pocket-book—a plain and firm statement of his rejection of all religion. He was now living and sleeping in his library, and just waiting cheerfully. He knew that he was slowly dying. In December he sent for his dearest friend and fellow Co-operator, Mr. E. O. Greening, and bade him a serene good-bye. "I have cared more for Co-operation than for any other public movement," he said; and Co-operators proudly inscribed the words on the handsome monument they put over his grave. Robert Applegarth was summoned for the next farewell. To that kindred spirit and fellow soldier Holyoake said, quoting W. S. Landor:—

"I have warmed both hands at the fire of life ;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

He was true to his self to the last. He never cast against life the sacrifices he had made, but always said that it had been 'good to him. In January his gently sinking vitality passed into a comatose condition. He had used

the remainder of it in December to dictate a last appeal to the workers of England, which filled a column in the papers. The General Election approached. There were signs of coming triumph for his Party, and he rejoiced. He passed into unconsciousness before the election occurred; but he recovered at times during the long fortnight, and they told him of Liberal victories everywhere. He lay back once more, and on January 22 the last breath of his great spirit failed.

Of the princely funeral, and the glowing tributes in the press of the world, and the magnificent gratitude of Co-operators—who raised £25,000 to build "Holyoake House" in Manchester—there is no space to speak. Sum it all up in the words of George Meredith, who never said an insincere word: "One of the truly great Englishmen of our time.....Such men as he are the backbone of the land. They are not eulogized in monuments; they have a stouter memorial in the hearts of all who venerate a simple devotion to the oppressed, the labours of a clear intelligence, contempt of material rewards, and unflinching courage."



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George Jacob Holyoake

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